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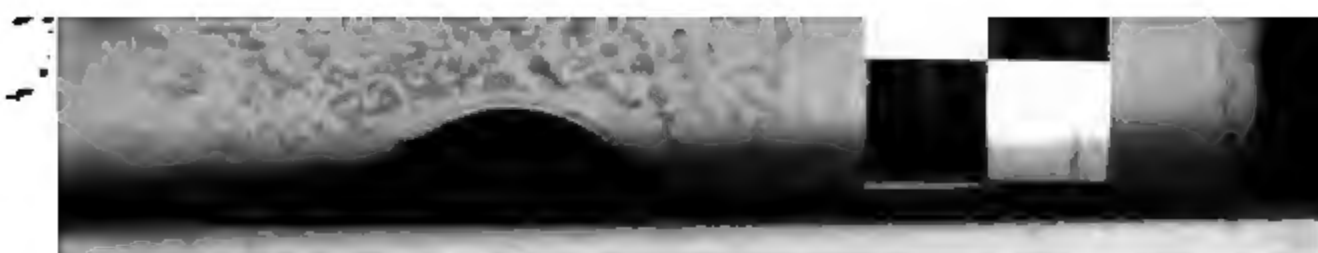
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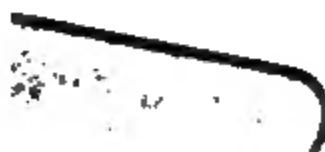
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*The Inner  
Flame*

*Clara Louise Burnham*



1. Fiction, American



Aunt Alice

from

Howard

Merry Knies  
1912







**By Clara Louise Burdham**

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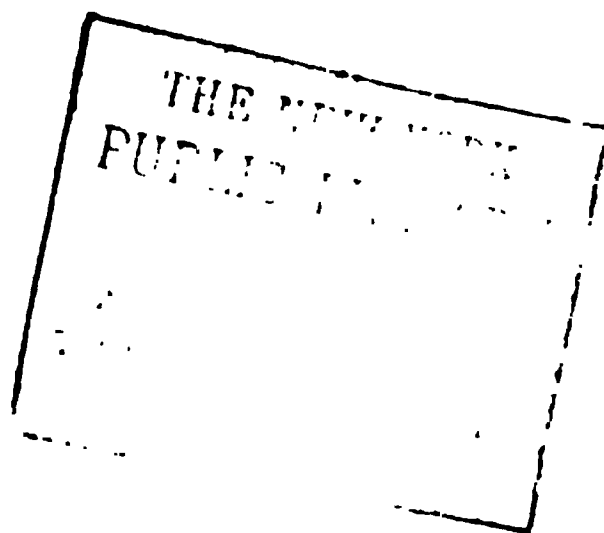
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THE CALL

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2/6.34





# The Inner Flame

A Novel

by

Clara Louise Burnham



Boston and New York  
Houghton Mifflin Company

*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*

1912

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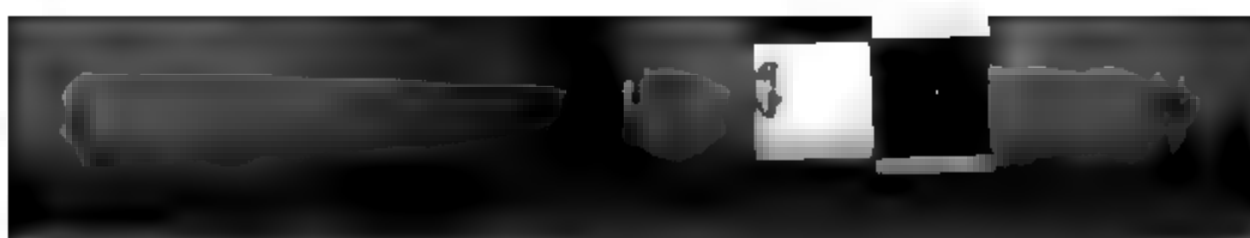
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## **The Inner Flame**





# The Inner Flame

## CHAPTER I

### A NOVEMBER NIGHT

SOFT snowflakes whirled around the lonely mountain cabin under a November sky. The wind that had rushed up the valley sighing and groaning between the wooded walls, now roared its wild delight in the freedom of the heights. The twilight was deepening fast. Two women were alone in the cabin. The one who was at home stooped and put another log on the blazing fire. The other could not have stooped, no matter how willing her spirit, so straitly and fashionably was her ample figure bound by artful bone and steel.

"Mercy, Mary!" she ejaculated, standing stock still in the middle of the room, fixed there by a triumphant shriek of the rioting wind. "I never had the least desire to go up in an aeroplane. Are you well anchored here?"

"Like a lichen on a rock," returned Mary



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Sidney, smiling. "Take off your hat, Isabel, and be comfy."

"Do you think we *must* stay all night?" demurred the visitor. "You know I love you, Mary, and if that wind would just let us hear ourselves think, I would n't ask anything better than an evening's chat with you alone."

"You would n't as it is," returned Mrs. Sidney soothingly, approaching her cousin and unpinning the veil which Mrs. Fabian had not raised. The visitor clung to her wraps with the feeling that an entire readiness to flee back to the haunts of men would aid her to depart. Mary Sidney's calm amused smile carried some reassurance. It flickered across her face as the firelight flickered across the dark rafters above.

"I *told* Henry I thought the sky looked threatening before we left town," declared the guest while she submitted to the gentle touch, "but nothing would do but that he should visit the mine this very afternoon. Is n't this fearful, Mary?" as a renewed gust shook the firelit rafters until they creaked heavily.

"Oh, no, this sounds a great deal worse than it is," was the response.

"You 're comforting me, I know you are"; and Mrs. Fabian, denuded of her correct hat,

## *A November Night*

permitted herself to take the offered chair by the fire. "I hope, though, that you have a kennel of St. Bernard dogs in the back yard. I *should* like to see Henry again, bad as he is!"

Mrs. Sidney took the other chair and rolled a blazing log to a better position.

"You'll see the men coming along in a little while — when they grow hungry," she returned placidly.

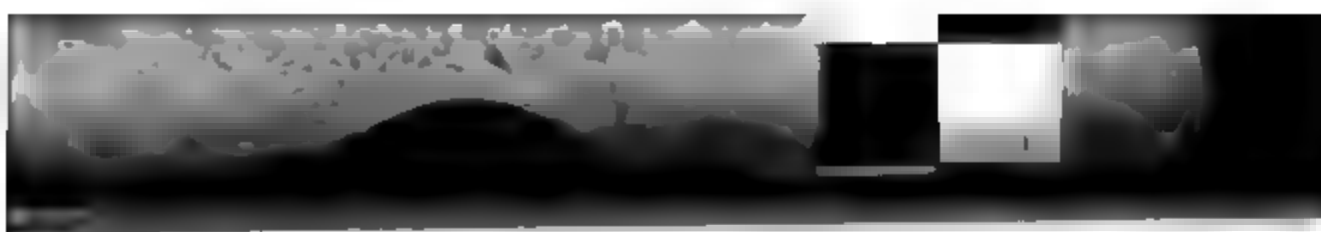
"And how in the world do you get servants up here?" demanded the other.

"We don't. We could get a Chinaman, but if we had him we'd have to amuse him, there's no one else for him to talk to, so we go without."

"Horrors!" ejaculated Mrs. Fabian with solemn repugnance. "And you live here alone!"

The hostess laughed at her tone. "Not enough of the year to dislike it. One learns a lot of things in these hills — bidding farewell to time, for instance. You see a man with a gun tramping through the valley and you rush to the door, and cry out, 'Hey, there, you with the gun, what day is this?' and the man turns and shouts back, 'You can't prove it by me!'"

Mrs. Sidney laughed again and her cousin shuddered.



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"Thank God for civilization!" ejaculated the latter devoutly; then, as the window-glass sucked in and out with a cracking sound, "Give me my hat, Mary," she said, sitting up. "If we're going down the mountain-side, let's go decently and in order."

"For shame, you Maine woman!" was the laughing rejoinder. "Your sea-captains would call this 'a breeze o' wind!' That's all. That's another thing one becomes acquainted with up here: the wind. I did n't know anything about it when I came. You should be here some nights if you call this a storm! I used to set my dish-pans out at the door; but when a few had whirled down the mountain-side into the valley, I learned caution. One can't go around the corner here and buy a dish-pan."

"Mary," Mrs. Fabian eyed her with bewildered admiration, "you're wonderful! You did n't used to be wonderful," she added in an argumentative tone. "Once you'd have made just as much fuss about this as I would. You remember — if you try, you'll remember perfectly — that I warned you, more than twenty-five years ago, not to marry a mining engineer. I told you then it was just as bad as marrying an army officer. There would be no repose about

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it, and no comfort. You see I was right. Here we are, to all intents and purposes, in a shrieking balloon, and you call it home!" The speaker kept a watchful eye on the rattling casement and drew herself up with renewed tension at each wind blast, but nevertheless she talked on.

"With it all you have n't as many lines in your face as I have, and your hair is as brown as ever. Mine would be white if I lived here instead of in New York. And the calmness of your eyes, and your smile! Tell me, Mary, tell me now honestly,—I shall sympathize with you, — is it the calmness of despair?"

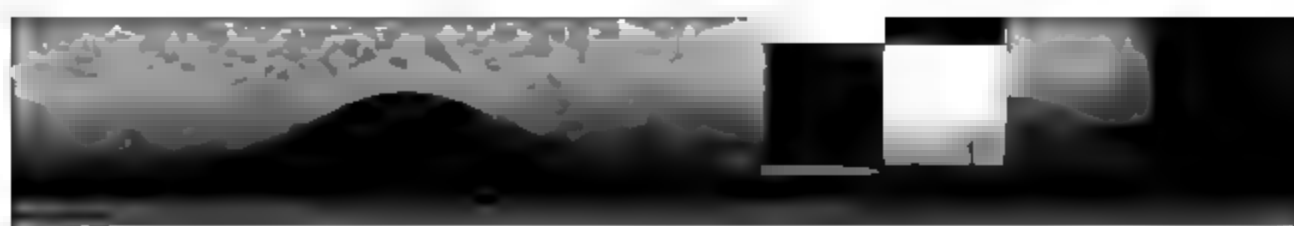
Mary Sidney did not smile. She looked into the depths of the fire and her guest wondered what memories were unfolding themselves to her rapt vision.

"No," she answered simply at last, "such calmness as I possess is not of despair, but of — faith." The speaker paused before the utterance of the last word as if hesitating for the one which should best express her meaning.

"Do you mean something religious?" asked Mrs. Fabian stiffly.

The stiffness was not disapproval. It was owing to the divided attention she was bestow-





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ing upon the storm, lest if she took her mind off the wind it might seize the advantage and hurl the cabin from its moorings.

"I should think a person would *have* to be religious here," she went on. "You must be reduced — simply *reduced* to trusting in Providence!"

Mary Sidney smiled at the fire. "I did n't have a trusting disposition. I did n't have even a happy disposition, as you evidently remember."

"Well," returned Isabel, "it was n't a bad one: I did n't imply anything like that; but you were one of the spoiled-beauty sort of girls, not a bit cut out for hardship," the speaker looked judicially at the once familiar face, softened from its old brilliancy. "What an advantage it is to have beautiful eyes!" she added bluntly. "They don't desert you when other things go; — not that it matters a bit what sort of eyes a woman has, living the life you have."

"Oh, Allan thinks it does," returned Mary in her restful manner.

"Does he appreciate you?" Mrs. Fabian asked the question almost angrily.

Mrs. Sidney smiled. "We don't talk much about that, but we're better companions, hap-

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pier, dearer, than we were twenty-five years ago."

Her cousin gazed curiously. "Then it did turn out all right. You've written so little to your friends. How could your relatives tell?"

"You see, now, why," returned the other. "There's not much letter-material here, and even when we're living in town, all our friends and our pursuits are so foreign to the people at home. Little by little one gets out of the way of writing."

"Don't you ever long for Fifth Avenue?" asked Mrs. Fabian suddenly, her cousin's exile impressing her more and more as utter forlornity.

"Oh, no, not for many years."

"You never could have kept your figure there as you have here," admitted the other in a spirit of justice. "I must say that," and the speaker composed her own rigid armor into a less uncomfortable position.

"Do your own housework, Isabel," advised the hostess with a smile.

"Heavens! it is too late to talk to me about that. I've enough to do without housework, I should hope. You've no idea how much worse things have grown in twenty-five years, Mary.

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A woman has so much on her mind now that nothing but regular massage from the crown of her head to her heels will offset it. The modistes and milliners are in a conspiracy to change styles so often that it takes active thought to keep abreast of them. Then you no sooner settle down really to learn Bridge, for instance, and feel that you can hold your own, than everybody begins playing Auction! And to know what people are talking about at luncheons you must see plays, and skim through books, reading at least enough so you can express an opinion; not that anybody listens. They all talk at once, their one and only object seems to be to get their own ideas out of their systems. I was glad to send Kathleen off to school. It does seem as if the girls had to go to college to escape as great a rush as we grown-ups live in. Then when they come back, having had another environment for four years, they adjust themselves to their own homes with such a sense of superiority that it makes you *tired*; that's what it does, Mary, *tired*. I've had a taste of it this summer. Kathleen has another year to go, but already she is perfectly changed. She cares no more for my advice, I assure you, than if I had just come down from Mars and

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had no judgment as to the things of this world. She's well-bred, of course, — I hope no daughter of mine could be less than well-bred, — but when I give her directions, or try to guide her in any way, there's a twinkle in her eye that I resent, Mary, I resent it distinctly. So there you are!" Mrs. Fabian gestured with a perfectly kept hand whereon a blazing gem flashed in the fire-light. "There we are between Scylla and Charybdis. We either have to send our girls to college and let the little upstarts think they've outgrown us, or else have them rushed to death at home, keep them up on tonics, and let them sleep till noon!"

With this dismal peroration Mrs. Fabian sat as far back in her chair as disciplined adipose would permit, and shuddered again at the wind.

"Is a son an easier proposition then, in that madding crowd of yours?"

"A boy does seem to have his life more plainly mapped out than a girl. Edgar is in his father's office." The speaker sighed unconsciously. "What is your boy like, Mary?"

Mrs. Sidney kept silence for a thoughtful moment before answering.

"He is like Pegasus harnessed to a coal-wagon," she said at last slowly.

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"How very extraordinary. What do you mean?"

Instead of replying, Mrs. Sidney went to a table in the far corner of the cabin and brought therefrom a portfolio which she opened on the chair beside her guest.

A mass of sketches was disclosed,— charcoal, water-color, oil. Mrs. Sidney lifted one, and held it before the other's eyes.

Mrs. Fabian raised her lorgnette.

"Why, it's you, Mary; and it's capital!" she ejaculated.

Another and another sheet was offered for her inspection.

"Why, they're all of you. The artist must be in love with you."

Mary Sidney gave her a slight smile. "I hope so, a little, but it was Hobson's choice when it came to models. Phil seldom could get any one beside me. Here's one of his father. He had to do it slyly behind a newspaper, for Allan is rather impatient of Phil's tendency."

"So that is what your boy is at! It's real talent, is n't it?"

"Yes, it is," returned the mother with quiet conviction.

"And where is he studying?"

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"He has never studied anything but mining engineering. He is working with his father here."

The unconscious sadness of the speaker's tone impressed her listener.

"He does landscapes, too," went on the mother, lifting one after another of the sketches of mountain, valley, and streamlet, "a little of everything, you see." Mrs. Sidney regarded the work wistfully.

"Why, they're lovely," declared Mrs. Fabian. "Why don't you pin them up on the walls?"

"Because it rather annoys Phil's father, to see them, and it only tantalizes the boy."

"So Mr. Sidney is n't willing he should study?"

"I don't think he would thwart us if he saw any hope in it, but one can't enter on the life of an art-student without any capital. Allan knows there is a living for Phil in the work of a mining engineer, so he has discouraged the boy's talent."

"It is a great responsibility to thwart a child's bent," declared Mrs. Fabian impressively.

"I have always felt so. I used to be very rest-



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less and anxious about it. My husband seemed to feel that because Phil was a strapping boy, a natural athlete, that painting was a womanish profession for him. He had the ability to help him into mining engineering lines, and he always pooh-poohed the idea of Phil's attempting to be an artist." Mrs. Sidney gave a little shrug. "We did n't have the money anyway, so Allan naturally has had his way."

"One can't blame him," returned Mrs. Fabian, who had relaxed as the wind ceased to shake the cabin. "Painting is even more precarious than acting; yet what a talent the boy has!"

She held before her a bold sketch in charcoal of the mountain-side in the winter — few in strokes, but striking in its breadth and power.

"He has had an offer from a newspaper in Denver to take the position of cartoonist. His ability for caricature is good. See these of Allan."

Mrs. Fabian laughed as she examined the small sheets. "I have n't seen your husband for ten years, Mary, but these recall his clean-cut face better than a photograph would, I believe. Phil rather gets back at his father in these, does n't he?"

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"Oh, Allan laughed at them too. He's secretly proud of Phil's cleverness, even while he discourages it. He tells him it is all right for an accomplishment, but a forlorn hope for a living."

"And right he is," responded Mrs. Fabian, laying down the sketches. "Look at Aunt Mary's experience. There she has lived alone all these years and given her life to the attempt to make a name in the artistic world. I go sometimes to see her, of course, for there she is right in town, but her pictures" — Mrs. Fabian lifted her eyes to the rafters — "they're daubs!"

"I know," returned Mary Sidney, looking back into the fire. "She sent me one on my last birthday. She never forgets her name-child."

Mrs. Fabian laughed. "I fancy you wished she would, for that time."

"No," returned the hostess, slowly, "I think Aunt Mary sees more than she has the technique to express. She gets an effect."

Mrs. Fabian raised her eyebrows. "She certainly does. She makes me want to run a mile."

"The gift led to our having a little correspondence. I sent her a couple of Phil's sketches and she was delighted with them."

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"She might well be," was the answer. There was a brief silence, then the visitor continued: "So Phil is something of a bone of contention between you and his father?"

"It is our only difference. Yet it can scarcely even be called that, because it is a fact that we have n't the money to give him the start he should have."

Mrs. Fabian looked at her cousin curiously.

"So this new calmness of yours — this repose. It is resignation, at least, if not despair."

Mary Sidney smiled at the fire. "No," she returned, "I told you. It is faith."

"Religion?"

"Yes, religion. Not the sort of ideas we were brought up in, Isabel. Something quite different."

"What is it, then? Where did you find it?"

"It found me."

"How mysterious! Is that wind coming up again, Mary?"

"How it blew that night!" said Mary Sidney thoughtfully, still looking into the fire. "It was just before Thanksgiving, I remember, five years ago. Allan and I had come up to the mine, Phil had gone back to college, and one night a belated traveller, overtaken by the storm which

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came up as suddenly as this, stopped at the door and asked if he could stay all night with us. He was one of these vital men, full of energy, who seem to exhale good cheer. Allan thoroughly enjoyed a talk with him that evening, and when we went to bed I remember his sighing and remarking that a man must be either a fool or a philosopher who could keep such an optimistic outlook on life as this Mr. Tremaine. I returned that perhaps our guest had struck a gold-mine here in the mountains, and I remember how Allan grumbled — ‘Either that, or the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.’

“Allan came in here once, where we had left the guest to sleep on the couch, to see if he wanted anything; and he found him reading in front of the embers. When he came back he remarked: ‘That fellow has a smile that does n’t usually last beyond the tenth year.’ The next morning dawned bright and our guest was in haste to depart. He tried in the nicest way to pay us for taking in a stranger, and we quite honestly told him that if any money were to pass it should go from us to him for cheering our exile. He took from his pocket a small black book and held it out to me. ‘Then,’ he said, ‘may I leave with you a little book which has

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broken up the clouds of life for me, and let the light stream through? You have time up here to read, — and to think?" He made the addition with that smile which had roused Allan's curiosity, shook hands with us both, thanked us again, mounted his horse and rode away. We never saw him afterward. I often wish I knew where he was, that I might thank him."

"What was the book?" asked Mrs. Fabian, impressed by the fervor of the other's tone.

"A — a commentary on the Bible. A new light on the meaning of the Bible."

"How queer! I'm sure I thought our family knew as much about the Bible as the average of decent people."

Mrs. Fabian's tone was slightly resentful.

"We did," returned Mary Sidney.

"So that's what you meant a few minutes ago by the calm of faith."

Mrs. Sidney nodded. "I know now what that sentence means: 'Cast your burden on the Lord.' Phil is the most precious thing on earth to me. The years seem to be slipping by without showing us a possible path to what we wish. 'Wait patiently on the Lord' does n't mean inaction either. I've learned that. I know that at the right time — the right moment —

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circumstances will arise to show us if Phil is to —”

A sudden blast of wind brought a start and a muffled exclamation from the guest, and at the same instant a stamping sounded outside. The lamp-flames rose wildly, and smoked in the instant of opening the door wide enough to admit the lithe form of a man whose shoulders and soft felt hat glistened with snow. He quickly closed the door and stamped again, taking off the hat from his short damp locks and shaking it vigorously.

“Phil, this is my cousin, Mrs. Fabian,” said Mrs. Sidney. “You used to call her Aunt Isabel when you were a little chap and we went to visit her once. Do you remember?”

“When a cousin is once removed she becomes an aunt,” declared Mrs. Fabian, looking the young man over with approval.

“My hand is too wet to shake,” he said, meeting her interested gaze, his own luminous in the firelight.

“Lucky boy! You have your mother’s eyes!” she exclaimed.

“Oh, no,” said Mary Sidney; “Phil’s are blue.”

“Dark with terror, then!” exclaimed Mrs.

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Fabian, again anxious. "Is n't the storm frightful?"

Phil's amused glance sought his mother's.

"It's sort of spitting outside," he returned, unbuttoning his corduroy coat.

"You're making fun of a tenderfoot," said Mrs. Fabian, watching his keen face admiringly. "Don't pretend. What have you done with my poor innocent husband?"

"He'll be up here in a few minutes with my poor innocent father who has been showing him why he'll never be a millionaire out of that mine."

"What do I care if he is n't, so long as he is n't lost in this storm!"

"I came on ahead because the mail had just been brought in." As he spoke, the young man brought a small bunch of letters and papers from an inner pocket.

"A great excitement, Isabel," said the hostess. "Only twice a week, you know."

"There's another letter from the Denver paper," went on Phil, looking at his mother steadily.

"You'll forgive us if we open everything, won't you, Isabel?" asked Mrs. Sidney.

"Indeed, yes. Don't mind me." Mrs. Fabian

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returned to her chair by the fire and regarded the pair who seated themselves by the table.

Phil had slipped off the damp coat, and his arm in its striped linen sleeve was thrown around his mother's shoulders.

The visitor's eyes filled with something like envy. Kathleen and Edgar were her stepchildren, the boy had been five years of age when she began to be, to use her own declaration, the best stepmother in the world. Edgar would never think of reading his letters with her in this frankly affectionate attitude. Must one live on a mountain-top, she wondered, to win the sort of look she had seen in this son's eyes?

"I've been showing your Aunt Isabel your sketches, Phil," said Mrs. Sidney, holding open a letter they had just read. "I told her about the Denver paper. This is another offer from them, Isabel, an increased offer."

"I'm sure that's very flattering," returned Mrs. Fabian.

Phil did not speak. His straight brows were knit in perplexity, and his lips were set in the look of longing that his mother knew.

"I don't know this writing from New York," said Mrs. Sidney, opening the next letter.





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Glancing over it she gave a startled exclamation.

"Whew!" breathed the boy, reading over her shoulder. "Poor Aunt Mary!"

"Isabel, Aunt Mary has gone!" exclaimed Mrs. Sidney.

"What! I did n't know she was ill. She was n't ill. Who is there to attend to things? Who wrote you?"

"Eliza Brewster. This is from her. It was very sudden. She had been at work at her easel an hour before. How sad it seems! How lonely! I wish we had both been there, Isabel. There is the letter." Phil took it across to Mrs. Fabian. "You see. She was buried day before yesterday. Oh, I'm glad we had that little interchange in the summer. Eliza loves her, but, after all, she is not her own."

Phil mechanically opened another letter. His thoughts were with that unknown relative with cravings like to his, working through the gathering years toward a goal which had ever retreated before her. He unfolded a business letter. It enclosed a small sealed envelope addressed to himself in another handwriting.

"Aunt Mary's!" said his mother. The son's

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arm was again around her as with heads close together they perused the following: —

MY DEAR GRAND-NEPHEW, PHILIP SIDNEY: —

When you open this letter, I shall have gone to a world where surely I shall be permitted to come nearer to the source of beauty.

My family all consider me a failure. I know it. They have laughed at my poor efforts. I know it; but since your mother wrote to me a month ago, sending me your sketches and telling me your longings, I have felt that out in the free Western country, there lives one with my blood in his veins, who will understand the thirst that has led me on, and nerved me to untiring effort — that has made it my only hope of happiness to live as I have lived, and work as I have worked. He will also understand, perhaps, that few as my rewards have been, I have occasionally felt that some beauty has crept through my brain and been fixed to the canvas, and that such moments have given me the highest bliss this world could bestow.

For a month, then, I have taken comfort in my artist-boy, no matter if you are known to others as an engineer. I have kept on my easel the photograph your mother sent me, and every



### *The Inner Flame*

day while I work, I look from time to time into your eyes, your mother's lovely eyes. I rejoice in your thick hair, and your splendid chin and firm, full-curved mouth. It is n't often that a head wanders from the Louvre and becomes set on a pair of modern shoulders. I, the old woman, peering through her spectacles, and painting with a hand that is often far from steady, have found a joy in studying the harmony of your promise. You have my blood in your veins, but you will succeed where I have failed. A happy failure, Philip. Don't feel sad for me. I've had moments of joy that no one knew. No one took the trouble to know; but nobody is to blame. Lives are very full in these rushing days.

I believe in you, and I long for you to get started toward that land where you fain would be. Your mother says that the door has n't opened yet. Looking into your young eyes, a great thought came to me. Supposing I, the ineffectual, could set that door ajar! With the thought came the first great regret for my poverty. Never mind, thought I stoutly; if I can set that door a wee bit open, his young strength can do the rest!

I have had warnings that soon the great door

## *A November Night*

will be opened for me; the door that ushers in to the heart's desire. Mine has been for Truth and Beauty, O God, Thou knowest!

So I am making my will — such a poor little short will; but all for you, my kindred spirit, my knight who will deliver from failure, my Philip Sidney.

The faithful maid Eliza will take care of my effects for you. You will find some useful things among the paraphernalia here. I look at my old easel and wonder if it will ever be promoted to hold a canvas of yours.

This letter will be enclosed to you in one from my lawyer, telling you the business side of my wishes. The heart side no one can tell. I swell with longing for your success, and happiness; and so good-bye.

The mother who never had a son, gains one in you. The painter who never was an artist, becomes one in you!

And so, dear, I am your happy

AUNT MARY.

Mary Sidney and her boy exchanged a look. With unsteady hands Phil straightened the legal letter, and they read it together. Then they rose from the table with one accord.



### ***The Inner Flame***

Mrs. Fabian, wrapped in thought, looked up at the sudden movement.

Phil's concentrated gaze went past her to the fire, and he stood motionless, one hand leaning on the table, the other arm around his mother. Mary Sidney clasped the rustling paper to her breast. All the self-forgetfulness of mother-love shone in her wet eyes as she met Mrs. Fabian's questioning look.

"Isabel, I told you it would come," she said. "I told you we should know. The light is here. Phil is going to New York."

## CHAPTER II

### SEVERED COMPANIONSHIP

ELIZA BREWSTER could count on the fingers of one hand the number of times that tears had escaped her pale eyes. She had always felt for those who wept easily, the same leniency without comprehension that she entertained for women who fainted.

Trials had come and gone in her life; but never, since the day when she discovered some boys maltreating her cat, had she shed such tears as flowed now in her sorrow. The cat's abbreviated tail bore witness still to that day's conflict, but both his wound and hers had healed.

When would this new wound cease to ache and palpitate! Each day there in the lonely flat, Eliza Brewster renewed war with the memories to which she had no mind to succumb. The gentleness of her mistress, her innocent, ever-springing hope, her constant disappointments, the solitariness of her narrow life, the neglect of her relatives — all these things re-



### *The Inner Flame*

curled to the faithful handmaiden with the terrific appeal which contracts the newly bereft heart, causing it to bleed afresh. Mary Ballard, in spite of her twenty years' greater age, had been child as well as mistress to the faithful woman, who cared for the quiet, shy dreamer of dreams through the twenty-five years of the latter's widowhood.

Now Eliza's occupation was gone. All her rather hard philosophy, all her habitual self-possession, was swamped in a world where she could no longer call her dear one from the easel to her meals; and where the rooms of the little apartment grew spacious and echoed from sheer emptiness.

Mrs. Ballard had bequeathed her maid all her clothing, and all her personal possessions, save one old-fashioned diamond brooch, which was to be sent to her namesake, Mary Sidney. Some weeks before her death, she told Eliza of the disposition of her effects. In referring to the small gift of money which was to be hers, she said:—

"I wish it were more, Eliza, but," looking wistfully into the eyes of her companion, "I have a great mission for my little capital as I have told you. If only the amount were as great as the object!"

### *Severed Companionship*

"Nonsense, talking about wills," rejoined Eliza brusquely, a new delicacy in the loved face making her tone sharp, "more likely I'll be leaving something to you; though I don't know what it would be, unless 't was the cat."

Mrs. Ballard smiled. "Not a bad legacy," she replied. "Pluto is very sympathetic. He likes to watch me paint. He has really concluded to endure the smell of oil and turpentine just to keep me company."

At the moment the night-black cat was lifting green eyes of approval to his own portrait which stood near, and Mrs. Ballard buried a veined hand in his glossy fur. A few weeks later that hand was still. Oh, the dear garments with the outline of the wearer still warm in their curves! Who has not known the tender, overpowering anguish of their touch? Every day Eliza tried to systematize and pack her new belongings, and every day she postponed the ordeal until to-morrow.

Mrs. Ballard's watch alone stood on the table at the head of her bed, hanging in the little satin slipper just as it had ticked beside her mistress's sleeping form so many years. The watch seemed as alive as Pluto, and almost as much of a companion. It spoke eloquently of





### *The Inner Flame*

the gentle being who had always been unconscious of its warnings.

On the mantelpiece in the living-room, which had been studio as well, was Philip Sidney's photograph and his two sketches, one of his mother, and one of a storm-beaten tree. They were the two that Mary Sidney had sent in response to her aunt's gift in the summer-time. All three pictures were turned now to the wall. Mrs. Sidney was a relative. That stamped her for Eliza. The sketches had been either the vainglorious gift of a fond mamma, or else prompted by hope of the very result they had gained. As for the photograph of the artist, Eliza could not deny that it had marvellously cheered and companioned the last months of her dear one's life.

Indeed, in those days, recent yet already seeming so long past, Eliza, out in her kitchen, had often laughed grimly to herself at the infatuation for the picture shown by her mistress.

"If she was sixteen she could n't be more head over heels in love," she would soliloquize. "I s'pose an artist has got to be just so stirred up by good looks, whether it's a landscape or a human; but I know I would n't trust a hand-

## *Severed Companionship*

some man around the corner with a dog's dinner."

In pursuance of these reflections, when her mistress had gone, Phil's picture went with the sketches, his face to the wall.

Eliza's attitude toward the whole world was defiance on the subject of her mistress's life-work. Of course, Mrs. Ballard was an artist; a great artist. Eliza knew it must be so, there were so many of her pictures that she could not understand.

A canvas which was a blur to her contained so much which the painter would explain while Eliza stood devotedly by, dutifully assenting to the unravelling of the snarl of form and color.

"You don't care for it, do you, Eliza?" the artist would say sometimes, wistfully.

"Indeed, I do, Mrs. Ballard," would come the response, and never words rang more prompt and true. "I'm just one o' those folks so practical, I can't see an inch before my nose and I've never had advantages. I have n't got any insight, as you call it, beyond a dishpan; but when you explain it so clear, that's when I begin to see."

This latter was a loyal lie; as a rule, Eliza never did see; but she applauded just the same

## *The Inner Flame*

with vague murmurs of wonder and admiration.

It hurt the faithful soul even now to recall how, when the sketches came from the West, her mistress had eagerly examined them, and bitten her lip, her eyes glistening. "There's the true touch, Eliza," she had said quietly. "This boy has a spark of the divine fire."

"Pooh! I don't think so at all," Eliza had returned stoutly and contemptuously. "Of course, that drawin' of his mother is pleasant enough, but you have n't seen her in years. You don't know how good the likeness is; and as for that landscape, that rough twisted tree most blown off its feet and clouds racin' above those rocks, nobody'd ever think they was anything except just what they are, a tree and rocks and clouds; awful pokerish, I call it, not a bit pretty." Eliza's long nose lifted in scorn.

Mrs. Ballard smiled and bowed her head over the wind-blown tree.

"My flesh and blood, still," she murmured.

Now, in the dreary days, Eliza moved about aimlessly, forgetting to eat, and roused only by Pluto's indignant *meows*, to remember that, though he might mourn, still he felt that he owed it to himself to keep his coat glossy by milk baths, taken internally.

## *Severed Companionship*

Never had he known such long luxurious naps in the lap of his mistress as now. Wrapped in thought she sat for hours without moving; the irrepressible tears welling up from her heart and creeping, one by one, down her thin cheeks.

She had made no friends in the cheap apartment building where they lived. It was a changing population, which ebbed and flowed at the mercy of its own financial tide.

"There ain't a lady in this house except you," Eliza had been wont to say to her mistress.

"I don't believe we know that," Mrs. Ballard had rejoined; "but we're too busy for neighboring, are n't we, Eliza?"

Whenever there had been any leisure, Mrs. Ballard had taken her handmaiden to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Not for worlds would Eliza mar the joy with which her mistress bestowed upon her this treat. So she climbed endless stairs, and plodded weary miles with fortitude, having ready a response to every worshipful utterance with which Mrs. Ballard pointed out this and that marvel.

"Wonderful, ain't it!" Eliza would respond with the regularity of clockwork.

"How I love to get you out of that kitchen,



### *The Inner Flame*

Eliza, up into this atmosphere of genius!" her mistress would say, in a burst of affection for the strong mainspring of her household.

"Wonderful, ain't it!" returned the beneficiary, stepping on the other foot in the effort to rest one leg.

The sight of the very exterior of the great repository of art-treasures caused Eliza's bones to ache, if she caught sight of the imposing pile from a car window.

One day, however, all this was changed. The Metropolitan Museum of Art rose in Eliza's estimation to the level of her own kitchen where a chromo depicting kittens in various attitudes of abandon hung over the table.

Mistress and maid were doing the well-worn circuit. The faithful echo had repeated "Wonderful, ain't it!" for the twentieth time. The ardor in Mrs. Ballard's eyes was lending wings to her slender body, but Eliza had lagged, spurred on, and rested the other leg, until, to paraphrase a bit from Mr. Lowell —

"On which leg she felt the worse,  
She could n't 'a' told you, 'nother," —

when suddenly an inspiration of deliverance seized her. The fact that it had not seized her

### *Severed Companionship*

months before was simply another proof of devotion to the sun of her existence. Each time she entered the massive gates to her place of torture, she left such mentality as she possessed behind her. As well might a fish be expected to navigate in the free air of heaven as Eliza in these marble halls. This was her mistress's element. Let her guide. But one memorable day the two were standing before a marine.

"Oh, Eliza, that's new!" exclaimed Mrs. Ballard; and from the vigor of her tone, her handmaid feared the worst. She had believed they were nearly ready to depart. Now her companion seemed inspired for another two hours.

"Might it not have been painted from your island," continued Mrs. Ballard. "What adorable work!"

"Wonderful, ain't it!" came Eliza's wooden accents.

"What feeling!" murmured her rapt companion.

"I only hope 't ain't sciatica," thought Eliza, wiggling her hip. Her casually roving eye caught sight of one vacancy on the bench in the middle of the room.

"Don't you want to sit down a spell and look

### *The Inner Flame*

at it, Mrs. Ballard?" she asked. "There's a place."

"No," was the slow, absent reply. "I seem to prefer to stand in its presence — a royal presence, Eliza."

Miss Brewster waited no longer. With incontinent haste she limped, as in seven-league boots, toward the desired haven. She saw that a portly gentleman was heading for the same spot. She sprinted. She beat him by a toe's length, and nearly received him on her maiden lap. He recovered himself and glared at her. She maintained an unconscious air, her gaze fixed on the sky of the marine painting. It was all she could see; there were so many standing in front of her, welcoming this new treasure to the home of beauty.

Presently Mrs. Ballard, missing her shadow, looked about and at last descried Eliza. She approached, her small, veined hands clasped on her breast for joy.

"It seems as if it must have been done from the island!" she exclaimed. "How can you sit down, Eliza! I should think it would take you straight to your old home!"

Miss Brewster did not say that she thought there was more likelihood of her again seeing

### *Severed Companionship*

her native place if she did sit down; but for once her clockwork did not act. It seemed as if the succumbing of her legs had impeded the other mechanism.

"I just felt as if I had to, Mrs. Ballard," she answered numbly.

"You dear!" exclaimed her mistress impulsively, speaking low. "I might have known it. You felt overcome. I don't wonder. It took me back to the island, too, in a flash! I dare say you often conceal homesickness from me, Eliza. We must try to go there next summer! I did use to think that perhaps Mrs. Fabian — but, no matter; we can go on our own account, Eliza, and we will, too."

"It would be lots better for you than staying here in summer, that's sure."

Mrs. Ballard sighed, "Yes, if only the rent did n't keep on, and keep on."

Eliza knew the arguments. She did not pursue the subject now. She rose, keeping firm pressure, however, against the bench.

"Take this place, Mrs. Ballard, and rest a minute."

"Oh, I'm not a bit tired. I thought we'd take one or two more rooms. The light is wonderful to-day."



## *The Inner Flame*

Up to the present moment Eliza in this temple of genius had, as has been said, galvanized her energies and followed where her mistress led, at any cost, as unquestioningly as the needle follows the magnet; but this was the moment of her emancipation. Mrs. Ballard herself gave her the cue, for she added with consideration for an unwonted sentiment: —

“Unless you’d rather stay and look at that reminder of home a while longer, Eliza? I’ll come back for you.”

“Oh, would you, just as soon, Mrs. Ballard?”

The eagerness of the tone touched her mistress.

“Why, of course, my dear, do so; but I’d get up if I were you.” Eliza had sunk back upon the bench with the certainty and impact of a pile-driver. “There is such a crowd you can’t see anything from here but the sky.”

“I feel as if I could look at that sky for a week,” responded Eliza with a sincerity which admitted of no doubt.

“It is wonderful, is n’t it?” returned her mistress, unconscious of plagiarism. She patted Eliza’s shoulder. “I’ll be back soon,” she assured her, and moved away.

“The good creature!” she thought. “How

## *Severed Companionship*

selfish I have been to her! I ought occasionally to let her go home; but I know she'd never go without me. She would n't believe that I'd eat three meals a day, no matter how faithfully I promised." And Mrs. Ballard laughed a little before becoming engrossed in an old favorite.

She was gone so long that Eliza cogitated with newly acquired ingenuity.

"It's a good thing," she reflected, "that the fool-catcher ain't artistic. He'd 'a' caught me here lots o' times. Supposin' I was with that dear crazy critter all this time, hoppin' along in misery, or standin' in front o' some paintin' like a stork." Eliza's light eyes twinkled. "Why should n't I set up a taste in pictures, too? Just watch me from this on."

After this day Mrs. Ballard did observe with joy a transformation in her handmaid's attitude. When they visited the galleries Eliza would move along with her usual calm until suddenly some picture would particularly hold her attention.

"Is that a very fine paintin'?" she would ask of her cicerone.

"Which one, Eliza? Oh, yes, I see. Certainly, or it would n't be here; but in that next room

## *The Inner Flame*

are those I thought we should make a study of to-day."

Eliza's light eyes swept the unbroken polished surface of the floor of the adjoining room. "I know I have n't got very far along in understandin' these things," she said modestly, "but to my eyes there is a certain somethin' there," — she paused and let her transfixed gaze toward the chosen picture say the rest.

Mrs. Ballard held her lip between her teeth reflectively as she looked at it too. On that first occasion it was a summer landscape painted at sunset.

"We 've passed it many times," she thought, "but it's evident that Eliza is waking up!"

The reflection was exultant. Far be it from Mrs. Ballard to interrupt the birth throes of her companion's artistic consciousness.

"Then stay right here, Eliza, as long as you wish," she replied sympathetically. "I shall be near by."

She hurried away in her light-footed fashion, and Eliza continued to stand before her cynosure long enough to disarm possible suspicion, and then backed thoughtfully away until she reached a bench upon which she sank, still with eyes upon the picture.

### *Severed Companionship*

Mrs. Ballard from the next room observed her trance.

"She is waking up. Her eyes are opening, bless her heart," she thought. "Constant dropping does wear the stone."

Eliza would have paraphrased the proverb and declared that constant dropping saves the life.

From this day on she professed, and triumphantly acted upon, an appreciation for certain pictures; and Mrs. Ballard marvelled with pride at the catholicity of her taste; for such serpentine wisdom did Eliza display in passing, unseeing, many an inviting bench, that never, to their last pilgrimage to Mrs. Ballard's mecca, did the latter suspect the source of her companion's modest enthusiasm.

"Poor thing," thought Eliza during these periods of rest; "it's a sin and a shame that she has n't got anybody worthy to come with her. If those relatives of hers were, any of 'em, fit to live, one of 'em would bring her here sometimes. The poor dear, as long as she has n't a soul but an ignorant country body like me to sympathize with her, I've got to do my best; and really if I set a spell once in a while, I'll have more sprawl and can seem to enjoy it more.

## *The Inner Flame*

It's awful hard when you can't think of anything but your joints! I'm younger 'n she is, and I'm ashamed o' gettin' so tuckered; but she's got some kind o' wings that seem to lift her along."

Mrs. Ballard, from the next room, caught Eliza's eye, smiled, and nodded, well pleased. So the era of peace ensued; and when Miss Brewster caught sight from a street car of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, she was able to regard it without a frown.

## CHAPTER III

### MRS. FABLAN'S VISIT

ELIZA was not obliged to give up the apartment until the end of the month. Hence her drifting from day to day, and Pluto's naps in the lap of luxury.

All her energy and systematic habits were in a state of suspension. Her clocks ran down. The watch in the tiny satin slipper beside her bed alone ticked the minutes away, and when Eliza wound it her eyes were too wet to see the time. Night fell and she went to bed. Morning dawned and she arose. She drank tea, but it was too much trouble to eat.

One day the bell rang. At first she determined not to answer it. Then second thought came to her. What was she waiting here for except to answer the bell? Was her next duty not to introduce the usurper into his kingdom — to give into his desecrating hands those objects, — easel, palette, brushes, paints, — hallowed by her dear one's use? At the sound of a knock she hastened to fling open the door.

### *The Inner Flame*

Mrs. Fabian, elegantly gowned and furred, stood before her.

Eliza gazed at this apparition dumb.

"Why, Eliza Brewster," exclaimed the visitor with concern, "I scarcely knew you." After the mutual gaze of astonishment the caller moved in with her air of stately assurance, and Eliza followed her perforce into the living-room. Here Mrs. Fabian swiftly examined the possibilities of the scanty chairs, then seated herself in the largest.

"You have been ill, too, Eliza? You look like a ghost!"

The gaunt woman in the alpaca dress, so filled with resentment that she begrudged her own tears because they informed this "relative" of her grief, stood in silence with a beating heart.

"Sit down, you poor creature," went on Mrs. Fabian, unsuspecting hidden fires.

They burned higher at the tone of patronage, but Eliza, weakened from mourning and lack of food, felt her knees trembling and sank into the nearest chair.

Mrs. Fabian, genuinely touched by the ravages she saw, broke the silence that followed.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

"I was greatly surprised and shocked to hear of Aunt Mary's sudden going."

She began to feel uncomfortable under the set gaze of Eliza's swollen eyes.

"I suppose you sent to my house at once, and found that Mr. Fabian and I were in the far West."

"No; I did n't think of sending," returned Eliza.

"You should have done so. Surely there was no one nearer to Aunt Mary than I."

"It was in the paper," said Eliza dully.

"Had I been here I should, of course, have taken charge of the funeral."

The pale eyes emitted a curious light.

"No, you would n't, Mrs. Fabian," was the quiet reply.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because the time for you to have done something for Mrs. Ballard was while she was alive."

Eliza was too spent physically to speak other than softly, but her words brought the amazed color to her visitor's face.

"You are presuming," Mrs. Fabian said, after a moment. "What do you know about it? I suppose Aunt Mary did not think it



## *The Inner Flame*

worth while to tell you all the things I did for her."

"No," agreed Eliza, "she never said a word about the times you came with your automobile to take her riding; nor the picture exhibitions you took her to see, or the way you had her to dinner 'Thanksgivin' time and other times, or how you had her to spend part o' the summer with you at the island, or —"

"Eliza Brewster, what does this mean!" Mrs. Fabian's eyes were dilated. "Aunt Mary was not related to my husband or to his children. I never expected him to marry my family."

Miss Brewster's gaze was fixed upon the speaker with pale scorn, but the latter continued with what she endeavored to make a dignified defence. "I always sent Aunt Mary a present at Christmas."

"Yes," interrupted Eliza. "Last season 't was a paper-cutter. You gave her cuts enough without that."

"And I called upon her at intervals," continued the visitor in a heightened tone to drown the small voice.

"Intervals of a year," said Eliza.

Mrs. Fabian started to rise, but bethought herself, and sank back.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

"You are impertinent," she said coldly. "A person in your position cannot understand the duties of one in mine. There can be no discussion between you and me." The speaker stirred in her chair and collected herself. "I — and every one of Aunt Mary's relatives — appreciate your faithful service to her, and thank you for it."

"Don't you dare!" ejaculated Eliza, with such sudden belligerency that Mrs. Fabian started.

"You're almost crazed with fatigue and grief, poor creature," she said at last. "I can see that you are scarcely responsible for what you say to-day. You must take a long rest. Shall you go home to the island or take another place in town? I can find you one."

Mrs. Fabian felt the superiority of her own self-control as she made this kind offer; besides, in these troublous days with servants, steady, reliable Eliza, with a sure touch in cookery, was not to be despised. The visitor accompanied her offer with a soothing attempt at a smile.

Eliza had relapsed into dullness. "I won't trouble you," she said.

"It would not be any trouble," was the magnanimous reply. "Just let me know any

### *The Inner Flame*

time when you would like a reference, Eliza. It will give me pleasure to reward your faithfulness."

Mrs. Fabian loved approval quite as much as she did admiration. She would feel much more comfortable to win that of even this uncompromising, cranky individual, so lined with the signs of suffering. As Eliza Brewster was a native of the island where Mrs. Fabian had resorted from the days of her girlhood, she had a very slight but old acquaintance with this woman. As she glanced at the thin hair, now fast turning grey, the sunken eyes and cheeks, and the bony, roughened hands, she shuddered beneath her ermine-lined sables, to remember that she and Eliza Brewster were about the same age. She passed a white-gloved hand over the firm contour of her smooth cheek as if to make sure of its firmness. "I believe it was I who recommended you to Aunt Mary in the first place, long ago," she added.

"That's one o' your mistakes," said Eliza drily.

"On the contrary," returned Mrs. Fabian graciously. She was determined to warm this forlorn specimen of New England frigidity into something humanly companionable, else how

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

was she going to attain the object of her visit? She went on with such flattery of manner as she might have employed toward a desirable débutante. "It has proved quite the best thing that I ever did for Aunt Mary; securing her comfort and thereby the peace of mind of all who belonged to her. Don't call it a mistake, Eliza."

"However that may be," returned the other immovably, "'t wa'n't you that did it. 'T was your Cousin Mary."

"Oh — was it? Oh, indeed?" responded Mrs. Fabian, slipping back her furs still further. Eliza Brewster's disagreeable manner was making her nervous. "Yes, I believe Mrs. Sidney was with us on her wedding-trip just at that time. Mr. Fabian and I have just returned from visiting Mrs. Sidney out in her wild mountain home."

Eliza's eyes roved involuntarily to two blank sheets of board standing on the mantelpiece; but she was silent.

"Do you know the contents of Aunt Mary's will, Eliza?" asked Mrs. Fabian, after waiting vainly for an inquiry as to her cousin's well-being.

"I do."

## *The Inner Flame*

“What do you think of it?”

“That don’t matter, does it?”

A streak of light illumined Mrs. Fabian’s annoyance. Ah, that was what was the matter with Eliza. After twenty-five years of faithful service, she had expected to inherit her mistress’s few hundreds. Full explanation, this, of the present sullenness. The disappointment must, indeed, have been bitter.

Mrs. Fabian felt an impulse of genuine sympathy. She knew the singular loneliness of Eliza’s situation; knew that she had no near kin, and the transplanting from the island home had been complete. What an outlook now, was Eliza Brewster’s!

“Perhaps the will was as much of a surprise to you as it was to the rest of us,” Mrs. Fabian went on. “The Sidneys were amazed. They did n’t tell me just how much Aunt Mary left young Mr. Sidney. Do you know?”

“Yes,” replied Eliza promptly.

And again Mrs. Fabian looked at her interrogatively. As well question the Sphinx. She comprehended the stony closing of the thin lips. There might be a combination which would make them open, but she did not have it. She shrugged her fine-cloth shoulders. “Oh, well,

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

it does n't matter. It must have been very little, anyway."

She sighed. She must get at her business, though she dreaded absurdly to introduce it. "Well, Eliza, if you will take me to Aunt Mary's room, I will go through her belongings. It is always the most painful duty connected with a death, but it cannot be escaped."

Eliza stared at her, speechless.

"Aunt Mary had a few very nice things," went on Mrs. Fabian. She tried to smile as at a loving memory. "The regulation treasures of a dear old lady, — her diamond ring, a diamond brooch, and a camel's hair shawl — My heavens!" cried the visitor, interrupting herself suddenly with a shriek of terror. "Take it away! Take it away!"

She clung to the back of her chair; for Pluto, silent as a shadow, had sprung upon the ends of her pelerine as they lay in her lap and was daintily nosing the fur, while perilously grasping its richness, his eyes glowing with excitement. Eliza rose, and sweeping him into one arm resumed her seat.

"Oh, how that frightened me!" Mrs. Fabian panted and looked angrily at the animal with the jetty coat and abbreviated tail, whose eyes,

## *The Inner Flame*

live emeralds, expanded and contracted as they glowed still upon the coveted fur.

If she expected an apology, none came. Eliza's pale face showed no emotion. Endurance was written in every line.

"To be interrupted at such a critical moment!" Mrs. Fabian felt it was unbearable.

"Let me see" — she began again with a little laugh. "Your pet knocked everything out of my head, Eliza. Oh, yes, I was saying that I will look over Aunt Mary's things now."

She rose as she spoke. Eliza kept her seat.

"You can't do that, Mrs. Fabian."

"I certainly shall, Eliza Brewster. What do you mean?"

"I mean that they're mine. She left 'em all to me."

The speaker struggled to control the trembling of her lips.

The visitor looked the limp black alpaca figure over, haughtily.

"Aunt Mary left you her diamond ring, her diamond brooch, and her camel's hair shawl?" she asked sceptically.

"She left her diamond brooch to her namesake, Mrs. Sidney. I sent it to her a week ago."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

"Then, since you know Aunt Mary's wishes, what did she leave me? The ring?"

"No, ma'am!"

"The shawl?"

"No, ma'am."

Mrs. Fabian's nostrils dilated.

"My aunt's poor trifles are nothing to me, of course, except for sentiment's sake," she said haughtily.

Eliza bowed her bitter face over Pluto's fur.

"I am quite sure, however, that she did not pass away without some mention of me,— her sister's child."

"She did, though, Mrs. Fabian. If it's a keepsake you want," added Eliza drily, "you may have the paper-cutter. It's never been out o' the box."

The visitor, still standing, eyed the other with compressed lips before she spoke: —

"I have told you that I don't consider you responsible to-day. You are half-crazed, and I'm sorry for you. Answer me this, however, and mind, I shall verify your words by a visit to Mrs. Ballard's lawyer. Did my aunt leave you, legally, all her personal possessions?"

"She did."

Mrs. Fabian maintained another space of



## *The Inner Flame*

silence, gazing at the seated figure, whose gown looked rusty behind the polished lynx-black pressed against it. There was no mistaking the truth in the pale, wretched eyes.

“Disappointed about the money, though, and taking out her ill temper on me,” thought the visitor.

To Eliza’s increased heaviness of heart, the lady resumed her seat.

“Aunt Mary’s death was sudden and unexpected and that explains her not speaking of me,” she said; “but I know it would please her that I should use something that she had owned. I remember that shawl as being a very good one. It came to her from some of her husband’s people. I’ll buy that of you, Eliza.”

“Will you?” returned the other, and Pluto emitted an indignant yowl and tried to leap from the tightening hold.

“Don’t you let him go, Eliza!” cried Mrs. Fabian in a panic. “He’s crazy about my fur. They always are. — Yes, the shawl is of no use to you and the money will be. It is so fine, it would be wicked to cut it into a wrap. I shall spread it on my grand piano.”

Silence, while Eliza struggled still to control

### *Mrs. Fabian's Visit*

the trembling lips, and Pluto twisted to escape her imprisoning arm.

"I'm willing to give you twenty-five dollars for that shawl."

Mrs. Fabian waited, and presently Eliza spoke:—

"It ain't enough," she said, against her impeding breath.

"Fifty, then. We all feel grateful to you."

"Mrs. Fabian," Eliza sat up in her chair as if galvanized and looked her visitor in the eyes, while she spoke with unsteady solemnity, "the price o' that shawl is one million dollars."

The visitor stared at the shabby figure with the grey, unkempt locks, then shrugged her shoulders with a smile. "You'll come to your senses, Eliza," she said. "Some day that fifty dollars will look very good to you. I'll hold the offer open —"

"Likewise," added Eliza, breaking in upon her words with heightened voice, but the same deliberation, "that is the price of each handkerchief she left me, and each one of her little, wornout slippers, and her —"

She could get no further. She choked. Mrs. Fabian rose; Pluto, with another cry and a supreme writhe, tore himself from his iron prison.

## *The Inner Flame*

The visitor shuddered, and looked at him fearfully, as his eager eyes seemed to threaten her. She hastened precipitately toward the door.

Eliza, putting the utmost constraint upon herself, rose and ushered her out.

Mrs. Fabian uttered a brief good-bye. Eliza was beyond speech.

While the visitor entered her waiting car, and sank with relief among its cushions, the mourner stood, her back against the closed door, and her eyes closed.

Restrained drops ran down her cheeks in well-worn ruts, and occasionally a spasmodic sob shook the slight form.

Pluto came to her feet, his short tail stiffly outstretched and his half-closed eyes lifted to the sightless face. In the long silence he rubbed himself against her feet in token of forgiveness.

## CHAPTER IV

### PHILIP SIDNEY

THE Fabians had given Philip Sidney a pressing invitation to spend his first week in New York with them. When he arrived, however, and announced himself at the house, through some misunderstanding there was no one there to receive him save the servants.

A comely maid apologized for the absence of her mistress, saying that Mr. Sidney had not been expected until the following day; and showing him to his room she left him to his own devices.

Emerging from his bath and toilet, he found Mrs. Fabian not yet returned. It was but four o'clock, and he decided to go to the Ballard apartment and attend to his errand there.

Eliza had been doing some sweeping, the need for it goading her New England conscience to action. Her brown calico dress was pinned up over her petticoat, and her stern, lined face looked out from a sweeping-cap.

## *The Inner Flame*

There sounded suddenly a vigorous knock on her door.

She scowled. "Some fresh agent, I s'pose," she thought. "Too sly to speak up the tube."

Broom in hand, she strode to the door and pulled it open with swift indignation.

"Why did n't you ring?" she exclaimed fiercely. "We don't want —"

She paused, her mouth open, and stared at the young man who pulled off a soft felt hat, and looked reassuring and breezy as he smiled.

"I did ring, but it was the wrong apartment. There was no card downstairs, so I started up the trail. Is this Mrs. Ballard's?"

The frank face, which she instantly recognized, and the clear voice that had a non-citified deliberation, accused Eliza of lack of hospitality; and she suddenly grew intensely conscious of her cap and petticoat.

"Come in," she said. "I was doin' some sweepin'. The first —" she paused abruptly and led the way down the corridor to the shabby living-room.

Phil's long steps followed her while his eyes shone with appreciation of the drum-major effect of the cap and broom, and the memory of his fierce greeting.

*Philip Sidney*

"I don't wonder Aunt Mary died," he thought. "I would too."

Meanwhile Eliza's heart was thumping. This interview was the climax of all she had dreaded. The usurper had an even more manly and attractive exterior than she had expected, but well she knew the brutal indifference of youth; the selfishness that takes all things for granted, and that secretly despises the treasures of the old.

The haste with which she set the broom in the corner, unpinned her dress, and pulled off her cap, was tribute to the virile masculinity of the visitor; but the stony expression of her face was defence from the blows which she felt he would deliver with the same airy unconsciousness that showed in the swing of his walk.

"You're Eliza Brewster, I'm sure," he said. "My mother knew you when she was a girl."

The hasty removal of Eliza's cap had caused a weird flying-out of her locks. The direct gaze bent upon her twinkled.

"I wonder if she'd let me paint her as Medusa," he was thinking; while her unspoken comment was: "And she never saw his teeth! It's just as well."

## *The Inner Flame*

“Yes, that’s who I am,” she said. “Sit down, Mr. Sidney. I’ve been expectin’ you.”

“You did n’t behave that way,” he replied good-naturedly, obeying. “I thought at first I was going downstairs quicker than I came up, and I’d taken them three at a time.”

His manner was disarming and Eliza smoothed her flying locks.

“The agents try to sneak around the rules o’ the house,” she said briefly.

“So this is where Aunt Mary lived.” He looked about the room with interest. “We people in God’s country hear about these flats where you don’t dare keep a dog for fear it’ll wag its tail and knock something over.”

The troublesome lump in Eliza’s throat had to be swallowed, so the visitor’s keen glance swept about the bare place in silence.

“I see she did n’t go in much for jim-cracks,” he added presently.

Eliza’s lump was swallowed. “Mrs. Ballard did n’t care for common things,” she said coldly. “She was an artist.”

Phil comprehended vaguely that rebuke was implied, and he met the hard gaze as he hastened to reply: —

“Yes, yes, I understand.” An increase of the

## *Philip Sidney*

pathos he had always discerned since learning about his great-aunt, swept over him now, face to face with the meagreness of her surroundings. "Did Aunt Mary work in this room? I see an easel over there."

"Yes, she worked here." The reply came in an expressionless voice.

"Poor Aunt Mary!" thought the visitor. "No companion but this image!"

Eliza exerted heroic self-control as she continued: "I've got the things packed up for you — the paints, and brushes, and palette. The easel's yours, too. Do you want to take 'em to-day?"

"Would it be a convenience to you if I did? Are you going to give up the flat immediately?"

"In a week."

"Then I'll leave them a few days if you don't mind while I'm looking for a room. I have n't an idea where to go. I'm more lost here than I ever was in the woods; but the Fabians will advise me, perhaps. Mrs. Fabian has been here to see you, I suppose."

Eliza's thin lips parted in a monosyllable of assent.

"What a wooden Indian!" thought Phil. Nevertheless, being a genial soul and having



## *The Inner Flame*

heard Miss Brewster's faithfulness extolled, he talked on: "We hear about New York streets being canyons. They are that, and the sky-line is amazing; but the noise, — great heavens, what a racket! and I can't seem to get a breath."

The young fellow rose restlessly, throwing back his shoulders, and paced the little room, filling it with his mountain stride.

Eliza Brewster watched him. She thought of her mistress, and the pride and joy it would have been to her to receive this six feet of manhood under her roof.

"She would n't 'a' kept her sentimental dreams long," reflected Eliza bitterly. "He'd 'a' hurt her, he'd 'a' stepped on her feelin's and never known it. He walks as if he had spurs on his boots." She steeled herself against considering him through Mrs. Ballard's eyes. "He's better-lookin' than the picture," she thought, "and I would n't trust a handsome man as far as I could see him. They have n't any business with beauty and it always upsets 'em one way or another — yes, every time."

Her eyes wandered to the mantelpiece whose bareness was relieved only by three varying sized pieces of blank paper. She felt the slight-

## *Philip Sidney*

est quiver of remorse as she looked. She seemed to see her mistress's gentle glance filled with rebuke.

She stirred in her chair, folded her arms, and cleared her throat.

"You can leave the things here till I go, if you want to," she said.

Phil paused in his promenade and regarded her. Her manner was so unmistakably inimical that for the first time he wondered.

Perhaps, after all, she was not just a machine. And the same thought which had been entertained by Mrs. Fabian occurred to him.

"Twenty-five years of faithful service," he reflected. "I wonder if she expected the money? She's sore at me. That's a cinch."

Phil's artist nature grasped her standpoint in a flash. The granite face, with its signs of suffering, the loneliness, the poverty, all appealed to him to excuse her disappointment.

His eyes swept about the bare walls.

"Where are Aunt Mary's pictures?" he asked. "Was she too modest to hang them?"

"There were some up there," replied Eliza. "I took 'em down."

The visitor's quick eyes noted the white boards on the mantelpiece. With an unex-

## *The Inner Flame*

pected movement, he strode across to it, and turned them around.

He stood in the same position for a space.

"Great guns, but she hates me!" he thought, while Eliza, startled, felt the shamed color stream up to her temples.

"What would Mrs. Ballard say!" was her guilty reflection.

Pluto here relieved the situation by making a majestic entrance. His jewel eyes fixed on the stranger for a moment with blinking indifference, then he proceeded, with measured tread, toward the haven of his mistress's lap.

"Hello, Katze," said Phil, stooping his scarlet face. He seized the creature by the nape of its neck and instantly the amazed cat was swung up to his broad shoulder, where it sat, claws digging into his coat and eyes glowering into his own.

"Say, charcoal would make a white mark on you, pussy," he went on, smoothing the creature in a manner which evidently found favor, for Pluto did not offer to stir.

"When I'm not doing her as Medusa," he reflected, "I'll paint her as a witch with this familiar. She'll only have to look at the artist to get the right expression."

### *Philip Sidney*

"A distinguished visitor from the island of Manx, I suspect," he said aloud.

"No," returned Eliza, still fearfully embarrassed. "Pluto was born right here in New York."

The ever-ready stars in the visitor's eyes twinkled again into the green fire opposite them.

"It was his tail I was noticing. Manx cats are like that."

"Oh, that was boys. If I could 'a' caught 'em I'd 'a' liked to cut off their arms."

"I'll bet on that," thought Phil, "and their legs too."

Eliza cleared her throat. She seemed still to see the gentle eyes of her lost one rebuking her. With utter disregard of a future state she was preparing a lie.

"About those sketches," she said presently, and such was her hoarseness that she was obliged to clear her throat again, "you see, I was — sweepin', and I turned 'em to the wall."

"Oh, yes," said Phil, and continued to smooth Pluto who purred lustily. "A pretty good one for New England," he thought; and carelessly turning the third card about, he came face to face with his own photograph.

## *The Inner Flame*

With one glance of disgust he tore the picture in two and threw it down.

Eliza started. "What did you do that for?" she demanded sharply.

Phil made a motion of impatience.

"Oh, it's so darned pretty!" he explained. "I thought all those pictures were in the fire."

"Mrs. Ballard set great store by that," said Eliza coldly, "and by the sketches, too," she added.

She was sitting up stiffly in her chair, now, and her gaze fixed on Phil, as, her cat on his shoulder singing loud praise of his fondling hand, he came and stood before her.

"I wish you'd let me see some of Aunt Mary's pictures," he said.

The dead woman's letter was against his heart. He felt that they were standing together, opposed to the hard, grudging face confronting him.

But this was Eliza's crucial moment. In spite of herself she feared in the depths of her heart that that which Mrs. Ballard had said was true; that this restless, careless boy had an artistic ability which her dear one had never attained. She shrank with actual nausea from his comments on her mistress's work. He might not

## *Philip Sidney*

say anything unkind, but she should see the lines of his mouth, the quiver of an eyelash.

She felt unable to rise.

"She left 'em all to me," she said mechanically, pale eyes meeting dark ones.

Phil brushed Pluto's ears and the cat sang through the indignity.

"Talk about the bark on a tree!" he thought. "I believe I'll paint her as a miser, after all! She'd be a wonder, with Pluto standing guard, green eyes peering out of the shadow."

He smiled down at Eliza, the curves of his lips stretching over the teeth she had admired.

"All right," he said. "I'm not going to take them away from you."

Eliza forced herself to her feet, and without another word slowly left the room.

Phil met the cat's blinking eyes where the pupils were dilating and contracting. "Katze, this place gives me the horrors!" he confided.

More than once on the train he had read over his aunt's letter, and each time her words smote an answering chord in his heart and set it to aching.

The present visit accentuated the perception of what her life had been. For a moment his

## *The Inner Flame*

eyes glistened wet against the cat's indolent contentment.

"I wish she had n't saved any money, the poor little thing," he muttered. "No friends, no sympathy — nothing but that avaricious piece of humanity, calculating every day, probably, on how soon she would get it all. I'll paint her as a harpy. That's what I'll do. Talons of steel! That's all she needs." He heard a sound and dashed a hand across his eyes.

Eliza, heavy of heart, stony of face, entered, a number of pictures bound together, in her hands. The visitor darted forward to relieve her, and Pluto drove claws into his suddenly unsteady resting-place.

Eliza yielded up her treasures like victims, and stood motionless while Phil received them. Never had she looked so gaunt and grey and old; but the visitor did not give her a glance. Aunt Mary's letter was beating against his heart. Here was the work her longing hands had wrought, here the thwarting of her hopes.

His fingers were not quite steady as he untied the strings, and moving the easel into a good light placed a canvas upon it.

Eliza did not wish to look at him, but she could not help it. Her pale gaze fixed on

## *Philip Sidney*

his face in a torture of expectation, as he backed away from the easel, his eyes on the picture.

Pluto rubbed against his ear as a hint that caressing be renewed.

He stood in silence, and Eliza could detect nothing like a smile on his face.

Presently he removed the canvas, and took up another. It was the portrait of Pluto.

“Hello, Katze. Got your picture took, did you? Aunt Mary saw your green shadows all right.”

He set the canvas aside, and took up another. Eliza’s muscles ached with tension. Her bony hands clasped as she recognized the picture. To the kittens over the table in the kitchen she had once confided that this landscape, which the artist had called “Autumn,” looked to her eyes like nothing on earth but a prairie fire! It had been a terrible moment of heresy. She was punished for it now.

Phil backed away from the canvas, and elbow in his hand, rested his finger on his lips for what seemed to Eliza an age. Her heart thumped, but she could not remove her gaze from him.

Pluto, finding squirming and rubbing of no



## *The Inner Flame*

avail, leaped to the floor and blinked reflectively at his mistress. A flagpole would have offered equal facilities for cuddling.

He therefore made deliberate selection of the least unsatisfactory chair, and with noiseless grace took possession.

Phil nodded. "Yes, sir," he murmured; "yes, sir."

Eliza's teeth bit tighter on her suffering under lip. What did "Yes, sir" mean? At least he was not smiling.

He went on, slightly nodding, and thinking aloud; "Aunt Mary was ahead of her time. She knew what she was after."

Eliza tried to speak, and could n't. Something clicked in her throat.

Phil went on regarding the autumnal tangle, and with a superhuman effort Eliza commanded her tongue.

"What was that you said, Mr. Sidney?"

Phil, again becoming conscious of the stony presence, smiled a little.

"Aunt Mary would have found sympathizers in Munich," he said.

"That's Germany, ain't it?" said Eliza, words and breath interlocking.

"Yes. Most of Uncle Sam's relatives want to

## *Philip Sidney*

see plainer what's doing; at least those who are able to buy pictures."

"Ahead of her time!" gasped Eliza, her blood racing through her veins. "Ought to 'a' been in Germany!"

And then the most amazing occurrence of Philip Sidney's life took place. There was a rush toward him, and suddenly his Medusa, his witch, his miser, his harpy was on her knees on the floor beside him, covering his hand with tears and kisses, and pouring out a torrent of words.

"I've nearly died with dread of you, Mr. Sidney. Oh, why is n't she here to hear you say those words of her pictures! Nobody was ever kind to her. Her relations paid no more attention to her, or her work, than if she'd been a — a — I don't know what. She was poor, and too modest, and the best and sweetest creature on earth; and when your sketches came she admired 'em so that I began to hate you then. Yes, Mr. Sidney, you was a relative, and goin' to be a success, and the look in her eyes when she saw your work killed me. It killed me!"

"Do, do get up," said Philip, trying to raise her. "Don't weep so, Eliza. I understand."

But the torrent could not yet be stemmed.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I've looked forward to your comin' like to an operation. I've thought you might laugh at her pictures, 'cause young folks are so cruel, and they don't know! Let me cry, Mr. Sidney. Don't mind! You've given me the first happy moment I've known since she left me. I was the only one she had, even to go to picture galleries with her, and my bones ached 'cause I was a stupid thing, and she had wings just like a little spirit o' light."

Philip's lashes were moist again.

"I wish I had been here to go with her," he said.

Eliza lifted her streaming eyes. "Would you 'a' gone?" she asked, and allowed Phil to raise her gently to her feet.

"Indeed, I would," he answered gravely, "and we should have lived together, and worked together."

"Oh, why could n't it 'a' been! Why could n't it 'a' been! What it would 'a' meant to her to have heard what you said just now about her pictures!"

Phil's hands were holding Eliza's thin shoulders, and her famished eyes were drinking in the comfort of him.

"I have an idea that we ought not to believe

## *Philip Sidney*

that we could make her happier than she is," he said, with the same gravity.

"I know," faltered Eliza, surprised; "of course that's the way I ought to feel; but there was n't ever anything she cared much about except paintin'. She" — Eliza swallowed the tremulous sob that was the aftermath of the storm — "she loved music, but she was n't a performer."

Phil smiled into the appealing face.

"Then she's painting, for all we know," he said. "Do you believe music is all that goes on there?"

"It's all that's mentioned," said Eliza apologetically.

"I have an idea that dying does n't change us any," said the young man. "Why should it?"

"It did n't need to change her," agreed the other, her voice breaking.

"I believe that in the end we get what we want."

"That's comfortin'."

"Not so you'd notice it," returned Phil with conviction. "It makes the chills run down my spine occasionally when I stop to realize it."

"What do you mean?"

## *The Inner Flame*

"Only that we had better examine what we're wanting; and choose something that won't go back on us. Aunt Mary did; and I believe she had a strong faith."

"We never talked religion," said Eliza.

"Just lived it. That's better."

"I did n't," returned Eliza, a spark of the old belligerency flashing in her faded eyes. "I can't think of one single enemy that I love!"

"You were everything to Aunt Mary. Do you suppose I shall ever forget that?"

"I sat down in front o' those pictures in the Metropolitan Museum," said Eliza, her lips trembling again. "It's awful big, and I got so tuckered, the pictures sort o' ran together till I did n't know a landscape from a portrait. Then I used to take on over somethin' that had a seat in front of it, and she'd leave me sittin' there starin'. Oh, Mr. Sidney, I can't think o' one other mean thing I ever did to her," — remorseful grief shook the speaker's voice, — "but I'd ought to 'a' stood up to the end. It would 'a' showed more interest!"

Phil squeezed the spare shoulders as they heaved. He laughed a little.

"Now, Eliza, whatever way you managed it, I know you made her happy."

## *Philip Sidney*

"Yes," groaned the repentant one, "she said my artistic soul was wakin' up. Do you s'pose where she is now she knows it was black deceit?"

"She knows nothing black where she is," — Phil's voice rang with decision; "but she does know more than ever about love and sacrifice such as you have shown her. Beside," in a lighter tone, "how about your artistic soul? See how far above everybody else you understood her pictures."

Eliza's hungry gaze became suddenly inscrutable. "Mr. Sidney," she began, after a pause, "I loved every stroke her dear hand made, but" — again pain crept into the breaking voice — "you said yourself America was n't worthy of her, and I'm only what you might call the scum of America when it comes to *insight* and — and *expression* and — and *atmosphere*. Usually I had sense enough to wait till she told me what a thing was before I talked about it; but one day, I can't ever forget it, I praised a flock o' sheep at the back of a field she was doin' and she said they was — was cows!"

Sobs rent the speaker and she covered her eyes.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I told her — 't was my glasses," she went on when she could speak. "I — told her they — had n't been right for — a long time. She laughed — and tried to make a joke of it, but —"

Eliza's voice was drowned in the flood.

Phil patted her shoulders and smiled across the bowed head at the forlorn mantelpiece, where the sketches, unconscious of forgiveness, still turned faces toward the wall.

"You've grown awfully morbid, alone here," he said, giving her a little shake. "You should be only thankful, as I am, that Aunt Mary had you and that you were here to take care of her to the end. Come and sit down. She wrote me a wonderful letter. I have it in my pocket and I'll show it to you."

Eliza obediently yielded herself to be guided to a chair. Pluto had selected the best with unerring instinct; and suddenly into his feline dreams an earthquake intruded as Phil tossed him lightly to the floor.

Drawing his chair close to Eliza, who had wilted back against the faded cretonne roses, the young man drew from his pocket an envelope and took out of it a letter, and a small card photograph.

## *Philip Sidney*

“Mother gave me this old picture of Aunt Mary —”

Eliza pulled herself up and took it eagerly. “I must get my glasses,” she said. “I’ve cried myself nearly blind.”

Phil’s big hand pushed her back.

“I’ll get them,” he returned. “Where are they?”

“There, on the end o’ the mantelpiece. I had ’em, readin’ an advertisement.”

She leaned back again and watched him as he crossed the room; watched him with wonder. In years she had not so given her confidence to a human being.

She put on the spectacles and wistfully regarded the picture of a pretty woman whose heavy braids, wound around her head, caught the light. Her plain dress was white and she wore black velvet bands on her wrists.

“Aunt Mary was considered different by her friends, mother says. In a time of frills she liked plain things.”

“I guess she *was* different,” agreed Eliza devoutly. “Would you think a man who married her would like whiskey better?”

Phil shook his head. “Sorry,” he said, laconically.





### *The Inner Flame*

"One good thing, he drank himself to death quick and left her free."

Phil held out the letter.

"Read it to me, please, Mr. Sidney."

"Can't do it," returned the young man with cheerful frankness. "It makes my nose tingle every time."

So Eliza read the letter in silence. It took her some minutes and when she had finished, her lip caught between her teeth, she took off her glasses and wiped them while she regarded Phil.

"And you've got to live up to that," she said.

"I'm going to try," he answered simply.

Eliza gazed at him, her hands in her lap. She felt old beside his youth, weak beside his strength, ignorant beside that knowledge which had stirred her mistress to exaltation. Nevertheless, the humble love, and desire to help him that swelled her heart was a new desire to live, a consecration.

Presently he took his leave, promising to return in a few days for his belongings.

After the door had closed behind him, she looked down at the cat, who had awakened from another nap at the stir of the departure.

He rubbed against her brown calico skirt as

## *Philip Sidney*

she lighted the gas; then she moved thoughtfully to the mantelpiece and turned the sketches about.

"Mary Sidney," she mused, looking at the graceful head of Phil's mother, "you've had your heartache, and your sacrifices. You've been most pulled in two, between longin' to stay with your husband and follow your son — you told me somethin' of it in your note thankin' for the brooch. Nobody escapes, Mary Sidney. I guess I have n't done you justice, seein' you've raised a boy like that."

Turning to the sketch of the storm-beaten tree, she clasped her hands before it. "Dear one," she mused tenderly, "you loved him. You was great. You died not knowin' how great you were; and you won't care if I do understand this kind better, 'cause all America's too ignorant for you, and I'm one o' the worst."

Her eyes dwelt lingeringly on the sketch. She fancied she could hear the wind whistling through the writhing branches. "It looks like my life," she thought, "risin' out o' the mist and the cloud."

She gazed at it in silence, then turned to the destroyed photograph. She seized the pieces quickly and turned them face up. The rent had

### *The Inner Flame*

missed the chin and cut across the collar. She regarded the face wistfully. The cat stretched his forepaws up her skirt until he was of a preternatural length. It was supper-time.

“I wonder, Pluto,” she said slowly, “if I could n’t fit that into a minicher frame. Some of ’em come real reasonable.”

## CHAPTER V

### ELIZA'S INVITATION

FOR the first time since she had been left alone, Eliza drank her tea that night without tears; and no lump in her throat prevented her swallowing the egg she had boiled.

She held Mrs. Ballard's watch in her hand a minute before getting into bed; and looked long at its gold face, and listened to its loud and busy ticking.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Ballard," she thought; and association added, "as we forgive our debtors!"

"No, I can't!" she muttered fiercely. "I can't! What's the use o' pretendin'!"

Muffling the watch in its slipper, she turned out the gas and got into bed. Composing herself to sleep more peacefully than she had been able to do for many a night, her last thought was of Mrs. Ballard's heir; and a sense of comfort stole over her in the very fact of his existence. Again she seemed to feel the sympathetic pressure of his kind hand.

## *The Inner Flame*

"He thinks she may be paintin' still," she reflected. "She's got colors to work with that's most blindin', they're so gorgeous, if we can judge anything by the sunsets at the island. Why not think so! It's just as reasonable as playin' harps, for all I can see."

Ever since her dear one's passing, Eliza had felt too crushed and too wicked to pray; and being unable to say the whole of her Lord's Prayer, her New England conscience would not allow her to say any of it; but to-night a sense of hope and gratitude lightened the darkness, and a new gentleness crept over her countenance as it relaxed its lines in slumber.

She wakened next morning without the load of despair on her heart; and slowly realized what had changed her outlook. She even smiled at the cat, who had leaped up on the foot of her bed. He understood that he might come no nearer.

"Every single mornin', Pluto, I've been dreadin' that the day had come I'd got to show her pictures to him. Well, that's over."

"Meow!" remarked Pluto, commenting on the selfishness of beings who overslept.

"Yes, I know what you want." Eliza turned her head wearily on the pillow. "'Weak as a

### *Eliza's Invitation*

cat'! I don't think much o' that expression. I notice you're strong enough to get everything you want. Oh, dear, I wonder if I'll ever feel like myself again!"

The cat jumped to the floor, and coming to the head of the bed sat down and regarded the haggard face reproachfully.

"You're just as handsome as a picture, Pluto," mused Eliza aloud. "I don't know as it's ever made you any worse'n common cats."

This optimistic change of heart lightened the atmosphere of the cheerless kitchen that morning; and Eliza drew up the shade, which let the sun slant in past a neighboring roof for a short half-hour.

A beam struck the kittens frisking above the kitchen table, and they seemed to spring from the shadowy gloom of their corner, flinging their little paws about with the infantine glee which had first captivated their owner.

"Oh, yes, you can dance, still," she murmured, addressing them reproachfully; but she left the shade up.

It was nearly noon when her doorbell rang again. Eliza hastened to the glass. She had on her black alpaca to-day. Sweeping-cap and

## *The Inner Flame*

apron were remanded to their corner, and she made certain that her hair was smooth, then went to the speaking-tube.

"Yes?" she said, and listened for the possible voice of yesterday; but a woman's tones put the question:—

"Is this Mrs. Ballard's apartment?"

"Yes," replied Eliza briefly.

"Is this Eliza Brewster?" again asked the sweet voice.

"It is," came the non-committal admission.

"May I come up, Eliza? It's Mrs Wright."

"Mrs. who?"

"Mrs. Wright. Don't you remember my spending the day with Mrs. Ballard last spring, just before I went to Brewster's Island?"

"Oh, Mrs. Wright!" exclaimed Eliza in a different tone. "Excuse me for keepin' you waitin'. Come right up."

Well Eliza recalled the enjoyment of her dear one in that visit of an old friend, rarely seen. Mrs. Ballard's social pleasures were so few, this day gleamed as a bright spot in memory; and, not content with opening wide the door, Eliza went out to the head of the stairs to receive the mounting figure.

"*She* stood here the last time," she said

### *Eliza's Invitation*

brokenly, as the visitor reached her and held out both hands to receive Eliza's.

The newcomer's silver-white hair made an aureole about the face that looked with kindly eyes into the other's dim ones.

"I was just thinking of that as I saw you waiting," she said. "It was a shock to me to learn that Mrs. Ballard had left us. Was it very sudden, Eliza?"

The latter could not trust herself to speak. She nodded and ushered Mrs. Wright into the living-room, where they both sat down, the visitor's heart touched by the mourner's altered countenance, and the evident struggle she was making not to give way. Her compassion showed in her gentle face and Eliza made a brave effort to smile.

"I know I'm a sight, Mrs. Wright," she faltered. "I've never been any hand to cry, but I've nearly washed the eyes out o' my head the past week. I don't expect anybody to know what I've lost." Her lips twitched and she bit them hard.

"I can very well imagine," returned the other, "for Mrs. Ballard spoke so warmly of you to me, and told me how many years your fortunes had been cast together.



## *The Inner Flame*

She said you were the mainspring of the house."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wright," said Eliza humbly. "Yes, I saw that she ate and slept right. Her interests were where I could n't follow 'cause I did n't know enough; but she was the mainspring o' my life. It's broken, broken. I have n't got the energy to lift a finger, nor a thing to live for. Honestly, Mrs. Wright," added Eliza in a burst of despair, "if 't wa'n't for the commonness of a Brewster bein' found so disrespectable as dead in a New York flat, and strange folks layin' their hands on me, I would n't 'a' lived through some o' the nights I've had since she went away. I'd lay there and try to think o' one single person it'd make any difference to, and there ain't one."

"My dear," returned Mrs. Wright, regarding the haggard face, "how about your relatives on the island?"

Eliza shook her head. "The only folks o' mine that are left are '-in-laws,' or else cousins I've scarcely heard from for twenty-five years. They have n't troubled themselves about me, and if I 'd 'a' walked out that way, they'd only 'a' said I'd ought to be ashamed o' myself."

### *Eliza's Invitation*

"And so you ought," said Mrs. Wright with her gentle smile.

"Well, I did n't anyway," said Eliza wearily. "Did you stay at the island all summer?"

"Yes, and I'm still there. May I take off my coat, Eliza?"

The hostess started up with sudden recollection.

"I hope you'll excuse me, Mrs. Wright; if I ever had any manners they're gone."

Slipping off the coat, and relinquishing it into Eliza's hands, the visitor went on talking. "My husband gave up business a couple of years ago. Perhaps Mrs. Ballard has told you that he was never a successful business man." Mrs. Wright stifled a sigh under a bright smile. "Nobody can be well and idle long, you know, so the next thing he began to be ailing, the dear man, and he thought the sea would do him good; and, my dear Eliza, it has done him so much good that we have become islanders."

"You don't mean you're going to stay there?"

The visitor nodded the silvery aureole of her hair.

"That is what I mean. Mr. Wright went fishing all summer and he thinks he has found

## *The Inner Flame*

his niche in life. He has not been so well and happy in years."

"You'll stay all winter?" asked Eliza incredulously.

"Yes," the visitor smiled again, "and all the winters, so far as I know. Mr. Wright is perfectly content."

"How about you?" asked Eliza briefly. She had gone back to her chair and frowned unconsciously into the peaceful face regarding her.

"Oh!" Mrs. Wright raised her eyebrows and gave her head a slight shake. "'In my father's house are many mansions!' I like to feel that it is all His house, even now, and that wherever I may live He is there, so why should I be lonely?"

Listening to these words, it seemed to Eliza as if some lamp, kept burning on the altar of this woman's soul, sent its steady light into the peaceful eyes regarding her.

"It's a good thing you can get comfort that way," she responded, rather awkwardly. "I know it must 'a' been a struggle to consent to it — any one used to a big city like Boston. What does your niece say to it?"

"Violet was with me a while. I am visiting her here now."

### *Eliza's Invitation*

"She teaches, don't she? — the languages, or something?" inquired Eliza vaguely.

"No, gymnastic dancing and other branches of physical culture. She works hard, and no place ever rested her like the island, she thought. Do you remember Jane Foster?"

The corners of Eliza's mouth drew down in a smiling grimace of recollection.

"Do I remember Jennie Foster!" she said. "We grew up together."

"Well, she keeps a boarding-house in Portland now in winters and comes to the old home, summers. We boarded with her, and now, instead of closing up the place, she has rented it to me."

Eliza shook her head. "Pretty high up," she commented. "Some o' those February gales will pretty near shave you off the hill."

"A good many husky generations have been brought up and gone forth into the world out of that house," said Mrs. Wright cheerfully. "There are some trees, you know. Do you remember the apple orchard?"

"Huh!" commented Eliza. "I know how the scrawny little things look when they're bare! A lot o' shelter they'll be."

Mrs. Wright dropped her head a little to one



### *The Inner Flame*

side and her kind grey eyes rested on Eliza's grief-scarred face. "I'm glad I came to see you," she said irrelevantly.

"I'm a kind of a Job's comforter, I'm afraid. When I've thought of anything the past fortnight I've thought about Brewster's Island, — a sort of a counter-irritant, I guess."

"No, no, we can't have that. You must n't call the Blessed Isle by such a name."

"Perhaps it won't be such a Blessed Isle after you've spent a winter there," remarked Eliza drily.

Mrs. Wright smiled. "I know it was your native place, and I hoped you might have pleasant associations with it."

Eliza sighed wearily. "Yes, if I could be twelve years old again, and go coastin' and skatin', and when it was dark tumble into bed under the eaves with a hot bag o' sand to keep the sheets from freezin' me, I should like it, I s'pose. I used to; but nobody on that snow-covered hill cares whether I'm alive or dead, and that cruel black ocean that swallowed up my father one night, and killed my mother, *that* roarin' around the island in the freezin' gale is the only thing I can see and hear when I think of the winter."

### *Eliza's Invitation*

"Then you have been thinking of going back to the island?"

"Well, it's either that or goin' into somebody's kitchen, here." Eliza's mouth twitched grimly. "Mrs. Fabian offered me a recommendation."

"Oh, yes. The Fabians were very kind to Violet this summer."

"You don't say so! I'm glad they can be kind to somebody."

The bitterness of Eliza's tone impressed her visitor. "Mrs. Ballard was Mrs. Fabian's aunt, I believe," she ventured.

"I believe so, too," said Eliza, "but nothing she ever did proved it."

Mrs. Wright veered away from dangerous ground. "I have been thinking of you a great deal since I learned of Mrs. Ballard's going, and I wanted at least to see you before I went back." There was a little pause, then she added: "It occurred to me that you might be going home to the island —"

"I have n't any home there," interrupted Eliza stoically.

"— and I was going to ask you, in that case, if you would n't eat your Thanksgiving dinner with me."

## *The Inner Flame*

Eliza looked at her visitor, startled.

"Think of me," she said slowly, "eatin' a Thanksgivin' dinner — anywhere."

Mrs. Wright felt a pang at her heart under the desolation of the voice. It seemed the voice of the forlorn room in which they sat. She rose to hide the look in her eyes, and moving to the mantel took up the sketches that stood there.

"Are these interesting things Mrs. Ballard's work?" she asked.

Eliza was clutching the meagre arms of her chair until her knuckles whitened. How fate was softening toward her! The thought that this friend of her lost one would have her own hearth on the dreaded island warmed the winter prospect. A link with Mrs. Ballard. A friend with whom she might talk of her. The rift made yesterday in her submerging clouds widened.

"Mrs. Wright," she said, unheeding the visitor's question, "you're religious, I know, 'cause you quoted the Bible, and 'cause you take cheerfully bein' buried in a snowdrift on Brewster's Island instead of havin' the things you're accustomed to. So I want you to know before you invite me to have Thanksgivin' dinner with you that I'm the wickedest woman in New York. I have n't said a prayer since

### *Eliza's Invitation*

Mrs. Ballard died. I hate Mrs. Fabian for her neglect of her, and I did hate the young man Mrs. Ballard left her little bit o' money to."

Mrs. Wright, holding the sketch of Mary Sidney, turned and looked at the speaker.

"Hated him 'cause he was an artist, and I did n't believe he'd appreciate her work, but just spend her savings careless. That's his mother you've got in your hand, and that's him, layin' on the mantelpiece torn across the middle."

Eliza's aspect as she talked was wild. Mrs. Wright picked up the torn pieces and fitted them together. In fancy she saw Eliza rending the card. She felt that she understood all; the heart-break, the starvation fare of tea, tears, and misery, and the blank future.

"His name's Philip Sidney, and his mother was Mrs. Ballard's niece and namesake. Yesterday he came. He was altogether different from what I expected. He took a load off o' my mind and heart. I don't begrudge him anything."

"You're sorry, then, that you tore this handsome picture."

"Oh, I did n't — 'cause Mrs. Ballard set such store by it. I only turned it to the wall.



## *The Inner Flame*

"T was he tore it. He said it was too pretty or something. He does look different. The picture's kind o' dreamin' lookin' and he's so awake he — well, he sparkles."

Mrs. Wright smiled at the haggard speaker.

"I'm so glad you like him. Has he come to New York to study?"

"Yes; he had to be a mining engineer when he wanted to paint. So now he's goin' to study with Mrs. Ballard's money."

"Why — I remember," said Mrs. Wright, thoughtfully regarding the sketches. "Mrs. Ballard told me about him in the spring." She looked up again at her hostess. "You've been through a great deal, Eliza," she said, "and you've tried to go alone."

"I had to go alone," returned Eliza fiercely; "but I can be honest if I am lonely and I won't sit down at your table without your knowin' that I'm a sinner. Don't talk religion to me either," she added, "'cause I ain't the kind it would do any good to."

Mrs. Wright came back to her chair and her eyes were thoughtful.

"I have a better idea still," she said. "For how long have you this apartment?"

"One week more."

### *Eliza's Invitation*

"Oh, only a week. Then, supposing you come and live with me this winter."

Eliza leaned back in her chair, speechless. The grey wall of the future slowly dissolved. The possibility of friendship—of a home—was actually unnerving in its contrast to all she had steeled herself to endure.

"Come and help me, Eliza," went on the gentle voice. "Show me how to meet an island winter. I believe between us we can make a cosy sort of season of it."

"Cosy!" echoed Eliza's dry lips.

"Yes. There by the gnarled little apple trees, handicapped by winter winds, and the forlorn little chicken-house that stands near the orchard. Do you remember that?"

"Yes," answered Eliza mechanically. "'T wa'n't always a chicken-house. Polly Ann Foster built it 'cause she quarrelled with her son and would n't live with him. I was a little girl and we were all scared of her. When she died they began using it for the hens."

"Well, it's empty and forlorn now. Miss Foster can't keep chickens and go back to Portland every fall. That's our only near neighbor, you remember."

### *The Inner Flame*

"I remember. Why should you be such an angel to me?" burst forth Eliza.

"Is that being an angel? Why, I'm so glad. You know I might be a little bit lonely at the island. Mr. Wright is pretty sleepy in the evening and the house rambles. We'll shut up part of it, Eliza, won't we?"

"Oh, Mrs. Wright!" exclaimed the lonely woman, every trace of her fierceness gone. "What a godsend you're givin' me."

"Then it's settled; and Violet will be so glad. She is n't quite pleased with our plan for the winter."

## CHAPTER VI

### BROTHER AND SISTER

KATHLEEN FABIAN sat at her desk, deeply engrossed in the theme she was writing, when her brother's name was brought to her.

The expression of her face as she took the card did not indicate that the surprise was wholly joyous. She frowned and bit her lip, and an anxious look grew in her eyes as she went out into the hall to meet the visitor, who advanced with bounds, and grasped her in one arm, giving her cheek a brotherly peck.

"What has happened, Edgar?" she asked as he led her back into her room.

"I've come to see you, that's all," was the rejoinder.

Edgar Fabian was an airy youth, carefully arrayed in the height of fashion. His fair hair was brushed until it reflected the light, and his jaunty assurance was wont to carry all before it.

"Is anything wrong at home?" insisted his sister.

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"Certainly not."

They were now inside the room and the young man closed the door.

"Well, I have n't any money," said Kathleen bluntly, — "at least, not for you!"

Edgar was but little taller than she, and, as she looked at him now, her serious slender face opposed to his boyish one, her peculiar slow speech, in which her teeth scarcely closed, sounding lazy beside his crispness, she seemed the elder of the two.

"This leaping at conclusions is too feminine a weakness for you to indulge in, Kath," was the rejoinder as the visitor slid out of a silk-lined overcoat; but he rested his gaze upon his sister's dark hair rather than the eyes beneath. "I like your hospitality," he added. "I hope it is n't presumption for me to remove my coat. Try to control your joy when your brother comes up from New York to see you."

"Of course I should always be glad to see you if — if you 'd let me," was the reply.

"What's to prevent?" inquired the visitor cheerfully.

"My diary," was the laconic response.

"Oh, you make me tired," said Edgar, taking out a cigarette-case. "May I?"

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"No," returned Kathleen, speaking with her characteristic deliberation.

"You may have one, too"; he offered his case, still standing, since she did not sit. He smiled as he said it; the evenness of his teeth and the glee of his smile had melted much ice before now.

"No, thanks," she answered coldly.

He gave an exclamation.

"Oh, your grave and reverend senior airs won't go down with me, you know." He sniffed suspiciously. "Some one has been having a whiff here this morning."

"It was n't I."

"Well, it was somebody; and some one more critical than I is liable to drop in here and notice it. Just to save you trouble, I'll light up. Better take one. It's your golden opportunity."

Again he offered the case, and now Kathleen took a cigarette mechanically. She still questioned her brother's debonair countenance.

"Well," he said impatiently, after a moment of silence, "are we going to stand here until dinner-time like two tenpins?"

"Are you going to stay until dinner-time?"

"Why," with another effort at gayety, "if you go on like this and positively won't take no

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for an answer, perhaps I shall be obliged to. Say, Kath, what's the matter with you? You used to be a good fellow. College has ruined you. I did n't treat you like this when you came to see me."

"Forgive me, Edgar," Kathleen's drawl became very nearly an exclamation. "I was thinking so hard."

She dropped into a chair and he lighted his cigarette, and bending forward allowed her to draw the flame into her own.

"Now, this is something like it," remarked the young man, sinking upon a leather-covered divan. He picked up a guitar that lay at its head, and strummed lightly upon it. "Think of your giving house-room to anything so light-minded as a guitar!" he added, his disapproving eyes roving about the entire apartment. "This room looks more like a hermit's cell every time I come."

"No," rejoined Kathleen, with her soft laziness of speech, and blowing a ring of smoke upon the air, "it is only that you have time to forget between your visits."

Edgar removed his cigarette and began to murmur "The Owl and the Pussy Cat," in a tenor voice calculated to pour oil on troubled

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waters, while he struck the accompanying chords with a sure touch.

“They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note!”

he sang. “Think of it!” he groaned, pausing to save the life of his cigarette; “plenty of money! Who would n’t be an owl or a pussy-cat!”

Kathleen’s eyes narrowed.

“You speak of the rarity of my visits,” he went on. “I suppose you think it is nothing to take a few hours out of a business day to run up here.”

Kathleen smiled. “On the contrary, I think it so much of a thing that it always startles me to get your card on a week day, and you seem to have other uses for your Sundays.”

“Very well,” returned her brother, strumming the guitar with conscious rectitude; “know then that the Administration sent me up here to-day on business.”

“With me?”

“No” (singing) —

‘Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will  
pledge —’”

“Edgar!” protested the girl lazily, “it’s too early in the day for that.”

“Hello, grave and reverend senior,” he re-



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torted. "I did n't know you were so much of a connoisseur."

The girl's reply had a sad note.

"I wish you would do something with that voice," she said.

The singer smiled. He was now smoking again, and strumming the melody of the song. Perhaps he was thinking that he had done a good deal with his voice.

"I don't know that it has been altogether wasted," he replied.

"Carrying off the honors as the singing-girl in a college play is n't what I mean."

"Oh, I'm sure it is n't," scoffed the possessor of the voice. "I'd take long odds that what you mean involves something that would come under the head of work spelled with a capital W —"

"Think of a *man butterfly!*" ejaculated Kathleen, removing her cigarette and her drawl for an unwonted verbal explosion. "Edgar, *I* should have been the man, and you the girl in our family."

"I should object," he rejoined calmly, all his attention apparently concentrated on the compassing of some intricate fingering of the guitar strings.

### *Brother and Sister*

"Think of your rooms at college and this!" went on Kathleen.

"I'd like mighty well to have a squint at the loved and lost to take the taste of this out of my mouth," returned the visitor imperturbably.

"How is father?" asked Kathleen, relapsing into her usual manner.

"Smaht," rejoined Edgar.

At the reminder of Brewster's Island, Kathleen's eyes smiled, then grew grave. "I can't bear to have you call father the Administration," she said.

"Why not? — you did n't want me to call him Governor."

"It sounds so — so disrespectful."

"Not to me. I think it suggests salaams."

"No, Edgar — slams; but I don't want to joke."

"I'm sure of it," interpolated the guitar-playing one.

"Stop that noise a minute, please."

He obeyed.

"I wish you would n't speak of father so coldly."

"Then it'll be likely to be hotly, and at that you'd make a fuss," returned the youth doggedly.

## *The Inner Flame*

"He is a good father," declared the girl, the lingering words coming devoutly.

"Yes," retorted Edgar drily. "Perhaps, if your little day-dream could come true and you be the son, you would n't think so."

"I believe it is father's fault largely," said Kathleen. "He began by spoiling you."

"Then, if I'm spoiled, what's the use of kicking? — and if he's done it he must pay for it; but that's just what he won't do — pay for it."

The speaker stubbed the light out of his cigarette and tossed it on the table. He rose and walked the floor.

"He has put you in his office," said Kathleen. "He will give you every chance to rise."

"Yes, and meanwhile pays me a salary smaller than the allowance he gave me at college."

"Because," said the girl, "he found that you could n't even keep within that. He knew you must wake up."

"What occasion?" demanded Edgar, standing still to gesture. "I'm the only son. Look at the money he has."

"And has worked for; *worked* for, Edgar. Can't you understand? Supposing you had

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worked like that, and had a son who dipped into the bag with both hands and threw your money away."

"I don't want to throw it away. I get one hundred cents' worth of fun out of every dollar I spend. What more does he want? I did n't ask to be born, did I? I did n't ask to have expensive tastes. Why should I have to ride in a taxicab?"

"You don't. There are the street cars."

Edgar's blond face turned upon her angrily. "When do you suppose I want a machine? When I'm doddering around with a cane?"

"Earn it, then."

"Yes, I can on a petty few hundreds a year!"

"You drive down with father every morning, don't you?"

"No, I don't. I have to get there before he does."

Kathleen laughed. "What an outrage!"

"I take the car first and then it goes back for him," said Edgar sulkily.

"Oh, the cruelty of some parents!" drawled Kathleen, knocking the ash from her cigarette. "The idea of Peter going back for father. He should stand in Wall Street awaiting your orders."

## *The Inner Flame*

"No, he should n't, but I should have a motor of my own. The Ad. is more old-fashioned than any of the other fathers in our set." The speaker paused and gestured defensively. "You'll get off all that ancient stuff about the new generation wanting to begin where the old left off. Of course we do. Why not? I hope my son will begin where I leave off."

Kathleen gave her one-sided smile — her Mona Lisa smile her admirers called it: —

"Where you leave off is not liable to be a bed of roses if you keep on as you've begun." She looked up at her brother gravely as she tapped the end of her cigarette and dropped it in the ash receiver. "Why don't you use your brains?" she asked. "Can't you see that the more father notices that you have no ambition, the tighter he will draw the rein?"

"I have plenty of ambition."

"For work?"

"Oh, you make me tired!"

The young man resumed his impatient walk.

The sister leaned back in her chair, her dark eyes following him, without the hint of a smile.

"I'd like to see you tired," she said seriously.

He turned on her. "Ever see me after a polo game?"

## *Brother and Sister*

"But life is n't a game, Edgar."

He opened his eyes at her and grimaced scornfully.

"The grave and reverend senior again; nearly ready to graduate, and inform the world that

'Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal!'

Might as well be in the grave at once as dig and grind the days away. Heaven help us when you get home! I suppose you must go through the fine-spun theory stage like the usual attack of measles."

"Measles are catching," remarked Kathleen quietly.

"Exactly! but I'm mighty glad I'm immune from the know-it-all disease."

"That would mean that you'd had it, Edgar, and you never did have it; not even a rash. Open the window, please. We're a little blue in here."

Edgar threw open the unoffending window with a force that threatened the mechanism.

"No doubt," he said, "you'd like to have me live, like that cowboy, in a stable, and get my own meals."

"A garage would suit you better, I suppose,"

## *The Inner Flame*

returned Kathleen. "What are you talking about?"

"Has n't mother written you of the genius who has come out of the wild and woolly to get his Pegasus curried in New York?"

"Has mother taken up a genius? — Mother, of all people!"

"Why, she's had him at the house, and insists on my being civil to him; but I have n't seen him yet. I get enough of him right at the breakfast and dinner table without hunting up the stable. His ambition is at the bottom of my coffee cup, and his genius for hard work is served as an entrée every night."

"Oh," — Kathleen's face gained a ray of interest, — "you mean that cousin of ours."

"He's no cousin," retorted Edgar. "He's one of mother's fifty-seven varieties, a sort of step-neighbor-in-law of ours. When father and mother were out at the mine they met him. I think it was up to him to stay out there and make that mine pay. I think if he'd shown a little genius for hard work right there, it would have been more to the point."

"Yes, mother wrote me." Kathleen's tone was tinged with the interest in her eyes. "What is his name, now?"

### *Brother and Sister*

"Sidney," responded Edgar with open disgust. "Oh, I'm authority on his name all right, — Philip Sidney; I've had it dinged into my ears faithfully."

"A name to live up to," remarked the girl. "It was interesting, Aunt Mary leaving him her money."

"It would have been more interesting if she'd had anything to leave."

Edgar had thrown himself back on the divan and was watching curtains and smoke draw out the window.

"Do you remember," continued his sister, "what nice cookies Aunt Mary used to give us when we were little? Mother felt sorry not to be here when she died."

"Oh, mother's ripping," declared Edgar, his cheerfulness restored by some inspiring memory. "She's had a hand-to-hand, knock-down-and-drag-out with the old gargoyle that holds the fort over there at Aunt Mary's."

"What do you mean?" drawled Kathleen with faint disgust.

"Mother gave a graphic account of the fray at dinner one night. I was n't giving the story my whole attention, but I gathered that she and the doughty Eliza each got hold of one end



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of Aunt Mary's camel's hair shawl and had a tug of war; and Eliza's cat won the day for her by jumping on mother and nearly clawing her furs off."

"Edgar," protested Kathleen, "your bump of respect is an intaglio!"

"Well, I think I've got it about right. There were diamonds mixed up in it too. I believe Eliza wears a diamond tiara at her work so as to keep it away from mother; while the parent of the worshipful Philip came in for a diamond necklace, and mother was left nothing but cold neglect."

"Absurd!" breathed Kathleen. "Aunt Mary was poor as a church mouse."

"Well, whatever happened, the fur was rising on the back of mother's neck, and I did n't know but there would be a silver lining to the cloud and she'd cut Philip Sidney; but," with a heavy sigh, "no such luck. The cowboy still gallops his Pegasus over my prostrate body every meal."

"What do you mean by a stable?" asked Kathleen.

"Why, Pegasus has to have one, I suppose."

"Is that all? Are you only being witty?"

"Not a bit of it. You know the literal truth

### *Brother and Sister*

is all I'm ever up to. The genius has a room over a stable, and an oil stove!"

"Why a stable?"

"Convenient for Pegasus, I suppose," responded Edgar carelessly. "Beside, doubtless he would feel out of place in any abode more civilized."

"Edgar Fabian, that's nonsense. I remember his mother, when she came East years ago, don't you?"

"They're as poor as Job's turkey," said Edgar with a careless shrug. "That's why he jumped at Aunt Mary's pittance like a trout at a fly."

"Oh, Edgar, what an object-lesson for you!" Kathleen clasped her hands.

"Oh, of course!" ejaculated Edgar, his even teeth very much clenched.

"You ought to go to see him!"

"So I've heard," with intense sarcasm. "Mother has bored the life out of me."

"It is n't civil not to," said Kathleen, relapsing into languor. "He's a sort of a relative."

"Yes. The sort to keep away from. If I went up there, it would be to take his mahl-stick and smash his face."

## *The Inner Flame*

"Nice, hospitable plan," remarked Kathleen.  
"Possibly he would n't permit it."

"Oh, I've no doubt he'd think it was real mean and pick up a fan and slap me on the wrist. Oh, forget him! Say, Kath," as if with sudden remembrance, "do you know I came off without my purse to-day?"

The girl's eyes gained a curious expression. She was silent a moment, hands clasped around her knee. Under her gaze her brother picked up the guitar again and his nervous fingers swept the strings.

"I thought you said this was a business trip."

"It is. Go down and ask them at the bank if I did n't put a bee in their bonnet this morning."

"Then the house pays your expenses. Your purse did n't have to suffer."

"Oh, well, if you want the literal truth, I'm flat broke."

"You always are flat broke at this time in the month. Why should n't *I* be? — as a matter of fact, I am."

Edgar frowned. "What have you been buying?"

"A new microscope. I've saved for it, Edgar."

## *Brother and Sister*

The girl cast a warm glance across the room to where, on a table, stood a tall slender object covered with a cloth.

“Saved for it!” was the disgusted response. “Shameful idea when the Ad. could just as well buy you an observatory.”

“I don’t believe father is nearly as rich as you think he is,” said the girl defensively.

“He’s the prize tight-wad. That’s what he is. Look at our summers! Is n’t it enough that instead of Newport the Fabians rusticate on Brewster’s Island?”

“He met mother there. He loves it.”

“Well, I can tell you, mother would exchange a whole lot of sentiment for one good whirl at Newport or some other place where there are live ones! Say, Kath, be a good fellow. You can spare a dime or so. Ten dollars would be better than nothing. I’ll give it back the first of the month, honor bright. Think of my having to depend on taxis! It would make angels weep.”

The sister continued to regard him and he reddened under the pensive gaze, and twanged the guitar.

“You never have paid me back the first of the month and I wish you would n’t promise,” she said at last; “but I’ll tell you what I’ll do,

## *The Inner Flame*

I'm coming home to spend Sunday and I will give you the ten dollars — it's all I have just now — if you will take me to see that cousin of ours."

"What cousin?" asked Edgar.

"Aunt Mary's heir. The artist."

"Why are you determined to stuff him down my throat? He is absolutely no kin to us and has no demand on us. I decline."

"Then I shall go with mother," declared Kathleen, in her laziest drawl. "I'm sure she will take me. I am interested in his determination. I want to see — his oil stove. I want to pat Pegasus."

"Go, then, and much good may it do you!" Edgar put down the guitar and started up. "Where's the ten, Kath? Awful sorry to bother you."

The girl did not rise. She shook her head.

"You have n't earned it. I've decided you must work for this one, before it follows its predecessors to that bourne from which no bank-note returneth."

There was an unusual sparkle in the eyes that met the blue ones.

"You said you could go with mother," protested Edgar.

### *Brother and Sister*

"I can if I have to, but I prefer to hunt up stables with a man."

"Oh, confound it! you always get your own way. Fork over, then. I'll go with you; but it just means fastening him right on us. We'll be cousins then for sure."

Kathleen went to her closet and reappeared with the ten dollar bill. With a gesture of farewell she touched her finger to her lips and bestowed the kiss on the bank-note.

Her brother looked at his watch.

"Great Scott! I've got to hike for that train," he said; and wriggling into his overcoat he kissed his sister's cheek, and hurried away.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FLITTING

It was Eliza's last day in the apartment. Out of respect to probable scruples on the part of her future hostess as to travelling on Sunday, she had planned to sit idle this Sabbath day, although everything was packed and she was ready to start.

By Mrs. Wright's advice she had sold nearly all the shabby furnishings of the apartment. She had eaten a picnic luncheon in the forlorn kitchen, from whence even the gambolling kittens had fled to the bottom of Eliza's trunk, and now sat on a camp-chair in the middle of the empty parlor, as solitary as Alexander Selkirk on his island, monarch of all she surveyed, which was a pair of green eyes glowering at her from behind the wire network in the side of a wicker basket, which reposed on the only other chair in the room.

Stern and inexorable looked Eliza sitting in state on the camp-chair, and furious glared the jewel eyes back at her.

## *The Flitting*

"You've got to get used to it, Pluto," she said. "Do you suppose I like it any better than you do? I don't know as you're so bad off either. I think I'd like to be put in a bag and carried to Brewster's Island with no care of cars or boats or anything else. You always do get the best of it."

Eliza looked very haggard. It had been a wrenching week, packing her dear one's belongings, and selling into careless, grudging hands the old furniture with its tender associations.

Philip had been too busy to come to her aid. They had exchanged notes. She had addressed him at the Fabians', and he had replied that he had taken a room, and asked that his belongings be stacked up somewhere. He promised that he would come for them early Sunday afternoon.

So now she was waiting, her capable hands folded in her black alpaca lap, and her face expressing endurance.

"I'm countin' the hours, Pluto," she declared. "This place is misery to me now. I feel just as much in a strange garret as you do in that basket. I just wish Mr. Sidney'd come and take his things and then there won't be much more daylight to look around here in. And I hope you won't act like all possessed



## *The Inner Flame*

when we start for the train nor when we get on it."

"Meow!" cried Pluto, exasperated.

"There now!" exclaimed Eliza, in trepidation — "you do that just once when the train's standin' still, and where'll we be! I've always thought you had a little more intelligence than the law allows; and if you go to actin' like an alley cat you'll disappoint me dreadfully!"

Eliza rose anxiously and threw herself on her knees beside the basket and opened it. Pluto sprang out, and she caught him and pressed her thin cheek against his fur in a rare caress. Her eyes stung in her effort to repress tears.

"Oh, law! I'm sick o' myself," she muttered. "Cryin'! cryin'! gracious, what a fool! I'd ought to sold you to somebody, I suppose," — she clung tighter to the handsome creature and buried her eyes in his glossy coat, — "or given you away, more likely. Who'd want to pay anything for a cat that don't know how bothersome it's goin' to be to get the right train, and has n't the decency to keep his mouth shut, and — Oh!" as a knock sounded on the door. "There he is now."

The glow of Eliza's one interview with Mrs. Ballard's heir had faded long ago. The sordid

## *The Flitting*

and wounding events of the week had eclipsed whatever cheer he had brought her, and it was only as one of the events of her flitting that she looked forward to his advent this afternoon, and the departure of the last and most intimate of her dear one's possessions.

The knock on the door preceded its immediate opening.

"May I come in?"

The long step took the little hall in three strides.

The sight that met the newcomer's eyes was the bare room, with Eliza kneeling in front of an open basket, clasping Pluto to her breast. The woman's face and posture were dramatic.

"Deserted!" was the word that rose to Phil's lips, but he repressed it. He would not twit on facts; but his all-observing eyes shone.

"I'm always wanting to paint you, Eliza," he said. "Sometime I will, too."

"Me!" returned Eliza drearily. "You'll be hard up when you take me."

"So far as that goes, I'm hard up now. That's chronic," responded Phil cheerfully. "What are you doing — not taking leave of that king among cats? If you're leaving him behind, I speak for him."

## *The Inner Flame*

"H'm!" exclaimed Eliza, loosening her clasp of her pet and rising. "You'd made a bad bargain if you took Pluto." She removed the basket from its chair. "Sit down, Mr. Sidney," she said wearily, resuming her own seat. "It's too forlorn for you to stay, but maybe you'd like to ketch your breath before you take the things."

Philip picked up the basket and looked curiously at its wire window.

"Yes," continued Eliza. "I'm taking Pluto, so I had to have that. It was an extravagance, and he ain't worth it. I despise to see folks cartin' cats and dogs around. I did n't think I'd ever come to it; but somehow I'm — used to that selfish critter, and he's — he's all the folks I've got. It never once came to me that you'd take him."

"Indeed I would," replied Phil; "and wait till you see the place I have for him. Rats and mice while you wait, I suppose, though I have n't seen any yet."

"Oh, well," returned Eliza hastily, her eyes following Pluto as he rubbed himself against Phil's leg. "I've got the basket now. I guess I'll have to use it."

"It's a shame I have n't been here to help

## *The Flitting*

you," said Phil. "You've had a hard week, I know, but I've had a busy one."

"You've got a room, you say," said Eliza listlessly. "Rats and mice. That don't sound very good."

Phil smiled. "I don't know, — as I say, I have n't seen them yet; but Pluto would be a fine guard to keep them off my blankets. I don't believe, though, there's been any grain in there for a good while."

"Grain!" repeated Eliza.

Phil laughed. "I'll tell you about it later; but first, may I have the things? I have an expressman down at the door. I rode over here with him in state. Good thing I did n't meet Mrs. Fabian."

Eliza's thin lip curled as she rose. She led Philip to a room, in the middle of which was gathered a heterogeneous collection of articles. "In this box is the paintin' things," she said, touching a wooden case. "In this barrel is some dishes. I could n't get anything for 'em anyway, and you wrote you was going to get your own breakfasts."

"Capital," put in Phil; "and here's a bedstead."

"Yes, and the spring and mattress," re-

## *The Inner Flame*

turned Eliza. "It's Mrs. Ballard's bed. I could n't sell it."

Philip regarded the disconnected pieces dubiously — "I guess I'd have to be amputated at the knees to use that."

"Well," — Eliza shook her head quickly. "Take it anyway, and do what you've a mind to with it, only don't tell me. The beddin's in the barrel with the dishes — you said you'd be glad of a chair, so here's one, and the two in the parlor are for you. You can take 'em right along. I have n't got very long to wait anyway. I calc'late to go to the station early."

Phil touched her shoulder with his hand.

"I'll see that you get to the station early enough."

"You must n't think o' me," said Eliza, as Phil picked up some of the furniture and started for the stairs.

When he returned for the next load he brought the expressman with him. Together they took the last of the articles down the stairway.

Eliza stood at the top and watched the final descent.

"Good-bye Mr. Sidney," she said.

He smiled brightly up at her across a couple of chairs, and the easel.

## *The Flitting*

"Good-bye for five minutes."

"No, no," said Eliza; "don't you come back." She winked violently toward the receding cap of the expressman. "You'd better ride right over with the things just the way you came."

"All right," responded Phil laughing. "*Bon voyage!*"

"Hey?" asked Eliza.

"Have a good trip. My respects to Pluto."

She went back into the apartment and closed the door. It seemed emptier, stiller than ever after the little flurry of moving.

"It was clever of him," she thought gratefully, "not to let the other man handle the easel."

Now, indeed, desolation settled upon Eliza Brewster. Pluto's short tail stiffened in the majestic disapproval with which he walked about the room in search of an oasis of comfort.

Eliza heard his protesting meows. She stood still at the window looking out on the grey November sky. "I have n't got a chair to sit down on, Pluto," she said. "It's got past cryin'!"

She took out the gold-faced watch that was ticking against her thin bosom. Two hours yet

## *The Inner Flame*

before there would be any reason in going to the station. Suddenly it occurred to her that she had placed flannel in the bottom of the cat's travelling-basket. This would be the golden opportunity to endear the spot to his forlorn feline heart.

She tucked the watch back in its hiding-place. "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!" she cried.

No response. The receding meows had ceased. She looked perplexed; then an illuminating thought occurred to her. Tables there were none, but the square top of the kitchen range remained. On this she had spread clean papers and upon them had laid her coat and hat, and the shabby boa and muff of black astrachan which had belonged to her dear one.

She hastened down the hall. Her intuition had not failed. Upon this bed, his glossy coat revealing the rustiness of the garments, lay Pluto curled up, regardless of vicissitudes.

Eliza had scarcely swept him off his bed when the outer door of the apartment opened again, and closed.

"There," called a cheerful voice; "that's finished. Business before pleasure."

Eliza hastened out into the hall. "You, Mr. Sidney?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Why,

## *The Flitting*

you have n't had time to get over there. Is your room so near?"

"Oh, no. We've been making the wagon artistically safe, so as not to smash any of Aunt Mary's valuables." The speaker, strong and breezy, smiled reassuringly into Eliza's anxious face.

"You'd ought to gone with him," she said. "Do you suppose the folks'll let him in all right."

"There are n't any folks but English sparrows," returned Phil. "I don't think they'll object."

"What are you sayin'?" demanded Eliza. "If there's a house in this city where there ain't any folks, I did n't know it. It's queer, ain't it, Mr. Sidney, that it's folks make loneliness. Now, this buildin' 's running over with *folks*, but there ain't an apartment where I could go in and say good-bye. They're always movin' in and movin' out like ants, and it makes it worse than if there was nobody. It was clever of you to come back, but don't you stay, 'cause there ain't any place to sit but the floor, and I'm going in just a few minutes to leave the key where I promised the agent I would, and then on to the station."



## *The Inner Flame*

"When does your train go?" asked Phil.

"I ain't just certain," replied Eliza evasively. "I'll get there in good season."

"I'm sure you will." Phil's eyes looked very kind. "How did you happen to take a night train?"

"Well, I did n't know as Mrs. Wright would want me to travel on Sunday."

"Is n't it Sunday in the afternoon?"

"Not after six o'clock," replied Eliza hastily. "We could play dominoes after six o'clock when I was a youngster."

"Aha," said Phil. "Then that train does n't go till after six. It is n't yet three."

"Now, Mr. Sidney," — Eliza was frowning at her own blunder, — "I wish you would n't trouble yourself. The station's nice and warm. I expect Pluto 'll act like all possessed, but I did n't calc'late to have any comfort with him. I'd been practisin' with him in the basket before you came to-day."

Eliza's careworn brow went to her visitor's heart.

"Where are you to leave the key? I'll take it for you."

"Oh, you need n't. It's the janitor, right here in the buildin'."

### *The Flitting*

"Then it's all clear sailing," said Phil. "Get on your things, Eliza."

"It's a little early," she demurred. "If it was n't for Pluto I would n't care; but you go along, Mr. Sidney, and don't think anything more about us. You ought to go and see that those goods get in all right."

"We'll be there to meet them. Do you suppose I would let you leave New York without seeing where I'm going to live? And do you suppose I'd let you out of my sight anyway till I put you on the train?"

"Dear me!" returned Eliza, fluttered, but feeling as if the sun had suddenly peeped through the November clouds. "I never thought —" she stopped undecidedly.

"Well, I did," said Phil heartily. "It's a shame that I have n't helped you any this hard week. Where's Pluto?"

"He may be back on the stove again," returned Eliza. "I don't dare take my eyes off him." She moved quickly toward the kitchen, and there on her habiliments lay the cat; but at sight of her he leaped guiltily to the floor.

Phil, following, laughed. "Well, things have come to a pretty pass when you have to hang your coat up on the stove." He looked about

## *The Inner Flame*

the spotless place. "I wonder if this apartment will ever be so clean again."

"Oh, I'm clean," admitted Eliza. "Mr. Sidney," — she paused again, her coat in her hand, and faced him, — "you don't want to go traipsing through the streets o' New York with an old woman and a cat!"

"That's where you're wrong," returned Phil. "You're the only girl I have in town. It's highly proper that we should go walking of a Sunday afternoon. You get on your things, and I'll wrestle with Pluto."

The cat, suspecting that whatever plan was afoot was not entirely according to his taste, led Phil a short chase; but all the havens which usually harbored his periods of rebellion having disappeared, he was soon captured, and when Eliza, hatted and coated, entered the living-room, Phil had laid the cat on the flannel in the bottom of the basket, and was keeping him there by reassuring caresses.

"Ain't he just as kind as he can be!" thought Eliza.

"Ready?" asked Phil, and closed the basket. He met Pluto's gaze through the window.

"It's all right, old chap," he laughed.

He was not unmindful of the advantage of this

## *The Flitting*

diversion of Eliza's mind, in leaving the apartment forever. He had a green memory of her stormy emotion. He tried to take the key from her now as they stepped outside.

"No," she said briefly, "I'll close this chapter myself," and she locked the door.

Philip balanced the basket ostentatiously. "Believe me," said he, "Pluto is some cat! How did you expect to get on with him alone?"

"I calc'lated to get a boy," replied Eliza in an unsteady voice. Memories were crowding her.

"Well, you have one," returned Phil, leading the way downstairs.

"But I'm strong, too. You've heard about the woman that carried the calf uphill every day till it was a cow? I've had Pluto ever since his eyes was open."

"Well, you'd need some hill-climbing with him to fit you for taking the elevated."

"Yes, I did some dread those steps. It's certainly clever of you, Mr. Sidney. They say the lame and the lazy are always provided for."

Thus Eliza Brewster left her home of years. She gave the key to the janitor and went out into the dull, damp November afternoon with

## *The Inner Flame*

her strong escort, whose good cheer again impressed her consciousness as a wonderful thing to have any relation to her own life.

"You've learned your way around real quick," said Eliza as they plunged into the nearest subway station.

"This is all bluff, Eliza, and you're the most trustful woman in the world. I want to go somewhere near Gramercy Park; but if we come out at Harlem I shall try to look as if I lived there."

"Gramercy Park!" exclaimed Eliza; and she thought — "Well, at that rate, Mrs. Ballard's money won't last long."

"I did n't know," she said aloud, "as you'd feel like gettin' a room in a real fashionable neighborhood."

"I'll bet," she thought acutely, "that's Mrs. Fabian's doin's."

The subway train came crashing in, and Pluto crouched in his basket.

Eliza's suspicions and anxieties increased as, after leaving the subway, their journey continued; and when they finally came into a region of old and aristocratic dwellings, her eyes were round and she could no longer keep silent. It was an outrage, an imposition, to

## *The Flitting*

have influenced the young art-student to commit himself to a home in these surroundings.

"I'd 'a' been a whole lot better person to 'a' helped you find a place than Mrs. Fabian," she said, more and more impressed with the incongruity of the situation. To be sure, Phil looked like a prince and fit for any environment; but not while trudging along with a shabby, grey-haired woman, and carrying a cat-basket.

"I know, I know, Eliza," he returned, with gay recognition of her perturbation and disapproval. "I'm sorry sometimes that elegance and luxury are necessary to me. It's the penalty of blue blood. Mrs. Fabian had nothing to do with this; but I had to find my level, Eliza. Blood will tell."

"You said rats and mice," she returned mechanically. "Are you sure you've got the right street?"

"Sure as a homing pigeon; — by the way, I might keep pigeons! I never thought of it."

"For the rats?" inquired Eliza with some asperity.

She had always heard that geniuses were erratic. Also that without exception they were ignorant of the value of money. Poor Mrs. Ballard! What a small space of time it would

## *The Inner Flame*

take for her little capital to be licked up as by a fierce heat.

"This way," cried her escort, and swung Pluto's basket triumphantly as he turned abruptly into an alley.

Eliza caught her breath in the midst of her resentment. "You do go in the back way, then."

"Not a bit of it!" retorted Phil. "My proud spirit could n't brook anything like that." He caught Eliza's arm and hurried her pace. "We go in the front way, please take notice!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN INTERRUPTED TEA

MORE bewildered every moment, Eliza hurried along obediently, and in a minute more found herself in a paved yard on which faced a stable built of stone similar to the fine house backing upon it.

Phil threw open a side door and disclosed the round, good-natured face of a man, leaning back in a ragged Morris chair, his feet on a deal table.

"Hello, Pat. I've brought my best girl to show her my room."

The Irishman sprang to his feet, and grinned politely.

"They have old girls in New York," remarked Eliza drily.

"Whatever age ye are, mum," said Pat gallantly, "ye don't look it."

They passed him and ascended a narrow stair. "This is cement, Mr. Sidney," said Eliza, "and probably no mice."

"That settles it, Pluto," remarked Phil. "You for the island."



## *The Inner Flame*

He ushered his companion into a room, empty but for a deal table and chair, an oil stove with a saucepan on it, and a couple of piles of Indian blankets, two of which were spread on the floor in place of rugs. One end of the table was piled with sketches.

"Well!" exclaimed Eliza. "Why did you —"

"Because," interrupted Phil laconically, and pointed to a double window facing north.

"Take off your things, Eliza," he added joyously, beginning to unbutton her coat.

"There were no horses that I saw," said the bewildered visitor.

"Family in Europe," returned Phil.

"But it's warm and comfortable."

"Have to keep fires on account of the plumbing. The coachman was a family man before master and mistress departed, and they kept house in two rooms up here. I have succeeded to Mrs. Maloney's kitchen. Behold the running water. The other room is used for storage. Being single, Pat got the job of caretaker and sleeps downstairs. Can you suggest an improvement?"

If Eliza had thought Phil handsome before, she stared now at the illumination of his triumphant face as his eyes questioned her.

### *An Interrupted Tea*

She smiled, and there was a protesting scramble in the basket.

"Come out, Katze, of course," said the host, and, stooping, released the prisoner.

Pluto leaped forth and made a tour of the room, smelling daintily of the blankets.

"Of course, when I get Aunt Mary's things, you know," continued Phil.

"I wish they'd come," said Eliza, dazed and smiling. "I'd like to see how they're goin' to look."

"They'll be here before you leave. Now, take the Turkish armchair, Miss Brewster, and loll back while I talk to you; and pretty soon we'll have some tea."

As he spoke the host doubled a striped blanket over the kitchen chair and deposited Eliza. She felt dumb in the change from dismal loneliness to this atmosphere charged with vitality.

Phil threw himself on the blanket at her feet, and leaning on one elbow looked up into the eyes which wandered about the plastered room.

"Made to order, Eliza, made to order," he assured her. "No one but Mrs. Fabian knows where I am, and she's not likely to interrupt me."

## *The Inner Flame*

"Stables ain't just in her line," said Eliza. "I was afraid, comin' up the street, that she had led you into extravagance."

"Oh, she is very kind," laughed Phil. "She was appalled when I told her what I had found, and seemed to think my oil stove the most pathetic thing in the world."

"Yes," remarked Eliza. "Her son Edgar 'd find some trouble livin' this way."

"I have n't met him yet."

"Nor Miss Kathleen?"

"No, she's at school, you know. Mrs. Fabian has been very good to me. No one could be kinder, and I'm afraid I've been a rather absent-minded guest, but getting started has been so glorious. Eliza, I'm the most fortunate fellow in the world. Just think! Even no paper on these walls!"

Eliza looked with disfavor at the rough greyish plaster.

"'T would be more cheerful with some real pretty pattern," she said.

Phil laughed and caught Pluto by the back of the neck as he was passing, and lifted him over into the hollow of his arm.

"I like it this way," he explained.

Eliza looked down at him admiringly. "I

### *An Interrupted Tea*

wish Mrs. Ballard could see you now," she said.

"I wish she knew what she has done for me. It seems as if this is the first time since my childhood that I have known peace."

At the word there came a sound of voices from below.

"The expressman!" exclaimed Phil, and springing to his feet opened the door.

"Sure; go right up," they heard in Pat's rich brogue.

"I'd better help him," said Phil, and went to the head of the stair.

What met his astonished gaze was a large black velvet hat ascending. It was willowy with drooping feathers, and in the dimness of the narrow stair it eclipsed the motive power which was lifting it. In his amazement Philip stepped back and presently met a slender face whose dark eyes were lifted to his.

"We're taking you by storm, Mr. Sidney," said a low, slow voice. "I hope it's not inconvenient."

Edgar followed close behind. "I tried to send your man up ahead," he said stridently, "but he seemed to think this sort of thing was all right."

## *The Inner Flame*

Philip stood back a pace further in actual bewilderment, and Kathleen Fabian extended her delicately gloved hand.

"We're the Fabians," she said, examining her host with quick appraisement, and her smile was alluring.

"Oh!" exclaimed Phil, recovering himself and taking the hand. "Very kind of you, I'm sure."

"If you think you're easy to find," said Edgar as they greeted, "you're much mistaken. Mother got it all wrong, as usual."

Philip took in at a glance the dapper form of his visitor. He had not been insensible of Edgar's neglect of him in the young man's own home; and had decided that Eastern and Western ideas of hospitality must differ with more than the width of a continent.

"Very good of you, I'm sure, to stick to it," he returned composedly. "Come into my suite and overlook its shortcomings if you can."

Eliza had risen, startled.

"I suppose you both know Eliza Brewster," continued Phil. "She made life comfortable for Aunt Mary so many years."

Edgar Fabian jerked his blond head in Eliza's

### *An Interrupted Tea*

direction. "How do," he said; but the host's tone and manner constrained Kathleen to approach the grey-haired woman, and again hold out the delicate hand.

"Was it you who made those good cookies Aunt Mary used to give us?" she asked slowly, looking curiously at Phil's guest.

Eliza allowed the white glove to take her bony fingers a moment, then she stepped behind the solitary chair and set it forward for the visitor.

The girl would have accepted it, but Phil interposed.

"Sit down, Eliza," he said good-humoredly. "Miss Fabian can get chairs at home. I am going to treat her with truly Oriental magnificence. Try this, Miss Fabian." The host indicated a pile of Indian blankets, and Kathleen sank upon them.

Then Phil turned to Edgar, who reached to the host's ear as he stood in high-chested superiority looking about the apartment with disfavor.

"The choice of soft spots is small," said Phil, "but help yourself. There's room beside your sister here."

Edgar moved to the pile of blankets and sat

## *The Inner Flame*

down; while Phil dropped, Turkish fashion, at Eliza's feet and faced them.

"What a splendid cat!" said Kathleen.

"Yes," agreed Phil. "Come here, Katze, and see the lady." He seized Pluto and handed him over to Kathleen."

"Oh, get out," said Edgar. "I hate cats."

His sister moved Pluto over to her other side where he drove his claws into the blanket with satisfaction while she caressed him.

"He'll soil your glove," said Eliza; "his hair comes out some." She resented the Fabian touch on her pet, and Edgar's remark had sent color to her sallow cheeks.

"I'd like a muff made of him," drawled Kathleen.

"Too late," said Phil. "He's going to Maine to-night with Eliza."

"He is n't your cat, then?" said the girl, and brushed her glove.

"No, Eliza refuses to give him to me."

"There's that oil stove," remarked Edgar. "I don't know what there is so particularly virtuous about an oil stove; but mother throws yours at me every time we have an argument."

Philip regarded the speaker speculatively. Edgar's voice had an arrogant quality, which

## *An Interrupted Tea*

gave no idea of its beauty when he broke into song. "I'd give you a glimpse of its virtues if the expressman would come," replied the host. He smiled up at Eliza while Kathleen watched him. "Did you put in cups enough for all of us?"

"Six cups and saucers," returned Eliza, "and six plates, and six knives and forks, and six spoons. I gave you the plated ones 'cause then you would n't care if they were stolen."

"But I should care," returned Phil gravely. "I shall search every departing guest."

"Indian blankets," said Edgar. "They suggest the pipe of peace. Let's make it a cigarette." He took out his case.

"Only one room here," remarked Phil. "Perhaps the ladies object."

Edgar grinned at his sister. "Do you object to a cigarette, Kath?" he asked, offering her the open case.

"Perhaps Mr. Sidney is not a smoker," she said, "and it would be unsociable."

The same curiosity which had grown in Phil's eyes as he regarded young Fabian, now stole into them as they met Kathleen's.

"I'm almost sure Eliza does n't indulge," said the host, "and perhaps she does n't like it."



## *The Inner Flame*

"Don't think of me, Mr. Philip," exclaimed Eliza hastily. "This is your house."

"My stable, you mean." He smiled. "No, it's yours this afternoon, Eliza. You're to give orders."

"Then you may smoke to your hearts' content," she responded promptly; and she sent an inimical look toward the graceful girl in the drooping hat. Let her smoke! Eliza hoped she would, and let Philip Sidney see what the Fabians were.

"Remove my sister's scruples, won't you, Sidney?" said Edgar, offering his case.

Phil took a cigarette, and Edgar passed them back to Kathleen.

"No, thanks," she replied. She had seen the cool curiosity in the host's eyes as they rested upon her a moment ago.

"Oh, go ahead," urged Edgar.

"I don't like your cigarettes," she returned shortly, annoyed by his persistence. A deep color grew in her cheeks.

"Wait till you know Kath better," said Edgar with a wink toward Philip. "You'll welcome any little human touches about her. She's at the most painful stage of her college career where she knows everything; and she's

### *An Interrupted Tea*

one of these high-brows; saves money — good money — and buys microscopes with it!" The utter scorn of the speaker's tone, as he offered Phil a light, caused the latter to smile.

"What are you doing with a microscope, Miss Fabian?" he asked.

"Hunting for an honest man," she returned in her lingering speech.

"Stung!" remarked her brother. "Say, I don't see any symptoms of painting up here," he added, looking around.

"No; you'll have to come down to the academy to see the works of art I'm throwing off," said Phil. "I've been there two days."

Now there was another stir belowstairs and this time it really was the expressman; and Philip's effects began to come upstairs.

"I'm afraid we're dreadfully in the way," said Kathleen; while Edgar held his cigarette between two fingers and moved about, watching the invasion of barrels, boxes, and bedstead, uncertain whether to lend a hand. "Aunt Mary's old duds, as I'm alive!" he thought, seeing Eliza's anxious supervision of each piece as Phil came carrying it in.

"A great way to entertain you, Miss Fabian," said the host brightly.

## *The Inner Flame*

"What can I do?" inquired Edgar perfunctorily, continuing to get in Phil's way with the assiduity of a second Marcelline.

"If you won't mind being put on the shelf for a minute," said Phil, tired of avoiding him, "I'm going to tote in one more and then we're done." And picking up the astonished Edgar he set him on a barrel which had been placed in a corner, and so succeeded in bringing in the heaviest of the boxes undisturbed.

Edgar, very red in the face, swung his patent leather feet for a minute and then jumped down. "We must be going, Kath," he said stiffly.

"Not till you've found the mahl-stick," she drawled, with stars in her eyes. "My brother is so curious about your painting implements, Mr. Sidney."

"They're in these boxes," responded Phil. "The very ones that dear little Aunt Mary used."

He had paid the expressman and was pulling down his cuffs. His guests were both standing.

"Personally," he continued, "I think the contents of the barrel more interesting just now. You must n't go without a cup of tea. One moment and I'll make a raid on Pat for a hammer."

### *An Interrupted Tea*

Phil left the room and Edgar still stood, quite flushed under his sister's smile.

"Do you want any tea?" he asked severely.

"I think I do," replied Kathleen.

"I'll send the car back for you, then."

"Not at all," she answered; and when the girl's voice took this tone and her eyes narrowed, her brother usually paid attention. After all, Kathleen was a useful court of last appeal. It was unwise to offend her.

"What's the matter? Eliza can chaperone you," he protested.

Simultaneously with Phil's disappearance Eliza had moved to the window and looked out on the advancing twilight. She heard the words, and her thin lips tightened.

"That's the very cat that assaulted and battered mother," went on Edgar, and although he lowered his voice Eliza heard the words and smiled grimly at a neighboring stable.

Kathleen frowned and motioned with her head toward the black alpaca back.

Edgar shrugged his immaculate shoulders.

"Well, tell me when you have had enough of it," he said, and threw himself back on the pile of blankets.

Kathleen was just planning some civil over-

## *The Inner Flame*

ture to Eliza when the host reappeared, a hatchet in his hand.

"That bold son of Erin dares to imply that I borrowed his hammer yesterday," he announced. "If I did, it is in Mrs. Maloney's closet; and if there it is as a needle in a haystack; for that closet, Miss Fabian, is responsible for the air of chaste elegance you observe in this apartment. If you'll all stand aside, not to be bombarded when I open the door, I will give one glimpse within."

Phil opened the closet door cautiously, and deftly caught a mandolin as it bounded forth.

"Sole relic of glee-club days," he remarked. "I don't know why I brought it, for I could n't play 'Yankee Doodle' on it now."

He delved further into the closet, and Edgar, picking up the mandolin as one friend in a strange land, removed it from its case with slow and condescending touch.

"Here's the hammer on the sink," said Eliza suddenly.

"Saved!" exclaimed Phil, pushing back billowing folds of grey. "I was just about losing in a combat with a bath-wrapper. Now, with these chairs and the hammer, what is to prevent our salon from being the most delightful success?"

### *An Interrupted Tea*

"Nothing!" exclaimed Kathleen, standing at the end of the table. "I have found some sketches, Mr. Sidney. May I look at them?"

"Certainly." The artist took the hammer and began an attack on the barrel which caused Edgar to raise his eyebrows in annoyance. He was testing the strings of the mandolin.

"Shall I light the stove?" asked Eliza.

"No, you're the guest of honor. Sit down, Eliza, and watch us. Mr. Fabian will light the stove."

"Heaven forbid," exclaimed Edgar devoutly, "that I should touch the enemy of my peace!"

Kathleen, her lip caught between her teeth as she turned the sketches with concentrated interest, sent an ironical glance toward her brother, strumming the mandolin on the blanket couch.

"Yes, you're elected, Fabian," said Phil, deftly removing the barrel-hoop. "You have the matches. You see the peace and calm on my brow? That is because I am serene in the knowledge of a lemon and a bag of sugar outside on the window ledge."

Reluctantly Edgar laid down the mandolin and approached the stove.

## *The Inner Flame*

"What do you do?" he asked superciliously. "Turn on something at the bottom, and light it at the top?"

"Edgar," warned his sister, "it is n't gas."

"Marrow-bones, Fabian, get down on them," said Phil good-humoredly; and disgustedly Edgar knelt to his *bête noir*.

Eliza's fingers itched to help him. She obeyed Phil's warning gestures to keep her seat until the match was finally applied to the wicks. Then, seeing that they were turned too high, she pounced down on the floor beside the young man, and pushing his immaculate arm away she lowered the wicks.

Edgar stared at the familiarity. "Excuse me," she said shortly.

"Must have a finger in the pie, eh?" remarked Phil.

"Do you know how long it'd take to get this room so full o' soot we could n't stay in it?" asked Eliza. "I wonder what sort of a mess you're goin' to live in here, Mr. Sidney, if you don't know that?"

"It's a smokeless one," protested Phil meekly.

"The cat's foot!" quoth Eliza scornfully. "Don't tell me! There's no such thing." She

### *An Interrupted Tea*

partly filled the kettle and placed it on the stove, watching the wicks with a jealous eye.

Edgar removed himself from danger and looked with exasperation at Kathleen, who with eyes aglow was turning the sketches.

"If I ever worked as hard for tea as this I'll be hung!" he thought, and returned to the mandolin as the one congenial object in a forlorn abode.

Even its long silent strings spoke plaintively against the vulgar banging which was removing the barrel-head.

"There!" exclaimed Phil presently. "I rather fancy the way I did that. I can use that barrel again."

"Yes," assented Edgar as he strummed, "for kindlings for the oil-stove."

Phil drew the barrel nearer the table.

"Now for the plums in the pudding," he said, and began to draw forth some papered cups from the excelsior.

Kathleen dropped the sketches and unwrapped the packages. She had stood three cups and saucers on the table before Eliza turned from her labors about the stove.

"What delightful old things!" exclaimed the girl.



## *The Inner Flame*

"Now, are n't you glad you stayed?" asked Phil, bringing forth a silver cream pitcher of long ago.

Eliza caught sight of the table, and suddenly threw up both hands with an exclamation.

"Mr. Sidney!" she cried. "I've given you the wrong barrel!"

"What? What's happened?" inquired Phil, halted by her tragic tone.

"All Mrs. Ballard's best things are in that barrel; the old china that was her mother's, and the solid silver, and everything; and I've gone and sent yours with the substantial crockery and the beddin' to the island!"

Edgar Fabian regarded Eliza as inimically as his stepmother might have done. So this old servant had been carrying off the heirlooms and been discovered.

He sat up very straight on his blanket couch.

"I'll speak to my mother," he said. "She can come over to-morrow and get them, and buy the right sort of thing for a bachelor" — he threw a glance around the plastered room — "apartment!"

Phil, not realizing the sensitiveness of the subject, laughed.

"Good work, Eliza! We'll have one aristo-

### *An Interrupted Tea*

cratic tea in the Sidney studio, before we fall to stone china and mugs."

"The others ain't stone china and mugs," cried Eliza. She was trembling from head to foot, as frightened and enraged by Edgar's suggestion as if her own life had been at stake. "They're all good, comfortable things. If it was safe I'd leave all these for you, Mr. Philip, just as liefs to as not, for she loved you; but you are gone all day; they'd be stole — just as Mr. Fabian says."

Edgar blinked, then his face grew scarlet as the servant's implication grew upon him.

"What do you mean — you —!"

He leaped to his feet and faced Eliza, who glared back at him. "These things should belong to my mother," he said, "and it's a good thing you did n't succeed in getting away with them. She may set some value on the old stuff. I don't know."

"Edgar!" exclaimed Kathleen, as scarlet as he, while the duel had all happened so suddenly that the host stared, dazed.

He had just lifted another silver piece from the barrel and taken it from its flannel bag.

"They do not belong to your mother," returned Eliza angrily. "They belong to me,

## *The Inner Flame*

to have and to hold, or to give away as I see fit."

Edgar shrugged. "Oh, in that case —" he returned. He did n't like Eliza's eyes.

"In that case," said Phil to him gravely, "I think you'll feel better to apologize to the woman who has put Aunt Mary's relatives under lifelong obligation for her devoted care."

Edgar tossed his head with a scornful grimace.

"Yes, I understand perfectly," went on Phil, coloring; "Aunt Mary was no kin to you, and I understand that she was a person held in little consideration by your family." The host's attitude was tense now, and his look compelling. "Nevertheless, Eliza Brewster happens to be my honored guest to-day, and I'm sure you will be glad to express your regret for your choice of words."

"Edgar, you did n't understand," said Kathleen. "Say so. Why, of course, you're glad to say so."

"No, I did n't understand," remarked Edgar with a languid air, strumming the mandolin, "and now that I do, I don't know that it is very interesting."

Phil saw Kathleen's acute distress.

### *An Interrupted Tea*

"Very sorry, I'm sure," continued the young man, nodding toward Eliza. "You can run away with your barrel and welcome. The Fabians will still have cups and saucers. I think," returning Phil's grave gaze contemptuously, "if your honored guest should apologize for her attack on my mother, it would be quite as much to the point. You heard her say that mother would come over and steal her trash, didn't you? Come, Kathleen." The speaker dropped the mandolin, squared his shoulders, and started for the door.

"No; oh, no!" exclaimed Phil, all his hearty Western hospitality in arms at the sight of his girl guest's expression.

Edgar turned on him again. "I fancied that my mother had been rather civil to you since your arrival. I'll tell her how you guard her dignity."

Edgar was fairly swelling with emotion, one fourth of which was indignant defence of his mother, and three fourths joy at a clear case against the poverty-stricken artist who had dared set his own sacred person on a barrel and make him light an oil-stove.

Kathleen's scarlet face and lambent eyes spoke her distress. Phil, faced with condoning

## *The Inner Flame*

the slur on his kind hostess, was bewildered and uncertain.

Eliza saw it all and was the most disturbed of the four.

"Oh, Mr. Fabian, it's all my fault!" she exclaimed, looking appealingly at Edgar. "Please stay for tea."

"Really, you know," said Phil, "this is all a tempest in a tea-pot." He held up Aunt Mary's graceful old-colonial silver. "This one would be too big to hold it."

"Come, Kath," said Edgar, ignoring them. "Will you come with me or shall I wait for you in the car?"

Kathleen gave him an imploring look, but he was already moving to the door.

Phil took an impulsive step toward her. "Perhaps you will stay," he said, in supreme discomfort. She gave him a little smile. "No, I must n't," she answered gently. "I'm sorry I had n't finished looking at the sketches."

"May I bring them over to you?"

She shook her head. "I go back to school in the morning. Good-bye, I wish you all success."

Eliza stood with tight-clasped hands. It had been her fault that the bud of an acquaintance

### *An Interrupted Tea*

which might have been serviceable to her young friend had been blighted. They would tell Mrs. Fabian. She might visit her anger upon him. Eliza had never expected to feel gratitude toward one of the name, but her surprise was mingled with that sentiment when Kathleen now approached her, laying her smooth gloved hand on the rough clasped ones to say good-bye.

"You are going to Brewster's Island?" she asked. "It is a strange time of year."

"'T was my home once," replied Eliza, tragedy of past and present so evident in her haggard face that a touch of pity stirred the girl's heart.

"I heard," said Kathleen, "that Mrs. Wright is staying there. How can she in the desolate winter?"

"I guess angels can live anywhere," responded Eliza. Her disturbed eyes met Kathleen's. "Miss Fabian," and her hard hand grasped the gloved one, "I don't care how cold the winter's goin' to be if only you'll promise me that I have n't done any harm to this boy here by my foolish talk. He ain't to blame if I seemed to — to speak about your mother. Don't, don't let her blame him for it. If I thought she would — if I thought I'd cut him

## *The Inner Flame*

off from friends — some day when I get to thinkin' about it up there on that hill I feel as if I should jump into the water and done with it."

"I'll explain," said Kathleen gently. "I hope you'll have a good winter. I'm glad you will have Mrs. Wright."

When the girl turned back, Edgar had gone; and the veil of perfunctoriness had fled from her host's eyes. He was looking at her as friend at friend.

He escorted her downstairs, and out through the alley to the waiting limousine within which, with elevated feet, Edgar was already solacing himself with a cigarette. At sight of the approaching pair, he leaped from the car, and received his sister with hauteur.

"Good-bye," said Phil composedly, when they were inside; "very good of you to come."

He closed the door, the machine started, and he returned to the stable, where Pat received him with a grin, still standing where he had risen when Kathleen passed through a minute ago. "I say, me bye," he said huskily, jerking his thumb in the direction of the stairway, "the auld one above there — she's yer second best girl, I'm thinkin'. That one," pointing to the street, "she do be a princess all roight. She

### *An Interrupted Tea*

turned them lamps on me when she first come in and asked for you, and I felt chape 'cause the stairs was n't marble; but look out, me son, I know that breed. She'll make ye toe the mark."

Phil smiled. "To be honest with you, Pat, I have just one best girl," he said emphatically.

Pat looked up at him with admiration.

"Is she in New York, thin?"

"Sometimes I think I shall get a glimpse of her here."

"Sure if she knows where ye are ye will, thin!" said Pat devoutly. "How does she dress so I'll know her? I'll be on the watch."

"Just now in scarlet and gold," said Phil, lifting his head and gazing beyond the stable wall.

"Faith, she knows a thing or two," nodded Pat. "'T is an old dodge, 'Red and Yeller, ketch a feller.'"

"In winter she goes all in white," said Phil, "soft, pure, spotless."

"Moighty wasteful fer the city!" said Pat seriously. "'T will be hard on yer pocket, me bye."

"In spring she's in golden-green among the browns, but in summer, full, glorious green, Pat. Oh, she's a wonderful girl, a goddess!"



## *The Inner Flame*

"Sure she is if she knows that green's the best of all the game," exclaimed the Irishman. "Whin'll she be comin'?"

"Ah, I have to go to her, Pat."

"'T is better so," agreed the other.

"I've thought she might meet me sometime out in the park."

"She can, sir." Pat gave Phil's shoulder a sounding slap.

"But I notice the park gate is kept locked."

"It is," agreed Pat, with shining face, "and 't is meself has a key. 'T will be yours for the askin' any day in the week."

"Great!" responded Phil. "I'll remember that."

"And sure I'll be lookin'," thought Pat, watching the artist take the stairway in bounds. "The women'll mob that bye afore he gets through. Sure I'd like to see the gurl brings that look to his eyes."

## CHAPTER IX

### HEIRLOOMS

As the Fabian car started toward home, Edgar hoped his sister would rally him on his failure to chastise the puny artist from the West. Anything was better than one of Kathleen's "stills," as he called his sister's periods of scornful silence. He was Kathleen's elder, he was her brother. By every law of propriety she should be guided by him and lean upon his opinions; but as he now reflected she was "more apt to jump on them."

At present her sombre eyes looked straight ahead under the picture hat, and her countenance expressed only composure of mind and body. He had thrown away his cigarette, and he began to hum the favorite aria from "Madam Butterfly." Kathleen, if she spoke at all, would probably try to persuade him to say nothing to their mother of the scene just passed. He would offer her an opening for speech. Perhaps she was anxious in spite of her acted composure.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I heard 'Butterfly' last week," he said.  
"Farrar can have me."

Silence.

"Well," he looked around at the slender dark face with the eyes full of slumberous fire.  
"Well, why don't you get off one of those juices of yours about the fair Geraldine probably not being aware of her good luck, et cetera?"

The chauffeur was playing with the speed limit. They would soon be at home. Kathleen realized that this would be the only opportunity to speak with her brother alone.

She slowly turned her head and met his quickly averted gaze. "You are not usually so chivalrous toward mother," she said. "Why did you think it worth while to make such a fuss?"

"Twitting on facts is bad taste," declared Edgar with his usual air of insouciance. If his sister would only talk, all would be well.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, Aunt Mary's faithful retainer showed the poorest possible taste. She said if mother knew that those antiques were left unprotected by anything but the oil-stove, she would prance over to that stable and nab them."

Kathleen stared at him. "Do you mean that she would?"

## *Heirlooms*

"Like a shot," responded Edgar cheerfully. "Was n't I bound to resent it?"

Kathleen kept silence a space. Since she had been at home this time, her mother had told her with some excitement of Eliza's presumption in retaining articles of no value to a servant.

"And whether I was warranted or not," went on Edgar, elated by her muteness, "'there comes an opportunity in the lives of men' which seldom knocks on a man's door the second time. I flatter myself I was quick enough to shut the box between that wild and woolly Westerner and us, so that he won't expect anything more of *me*, in any event."

"I should think not," returned Kathleen slowly. "The childish way you took your playthings and went home was ridiculous."

Edgar's face flamed. "Don't be nasty, Kathleen, just because you know how," he said, dropping his careless tone. "No doubt you thought it was very funny to see me lifted about like a doll, and on my knees lighting a stove. I went there to please you, but I can tell you a very little of alleys and stables will do for me. When I go slumming it'll be where the poor know their place and know mine."

"Oh, Edgar," said Kathleen hopelessly.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Well, is it your intention to tell mother what happened?"

"I'm going to keep that up my sleeve. It may come in handy sometime."

"It would hurt her feelings, and do no good," said the girl.

"Do no good? What! Not if it kept her from inviting the cowboy early and often to the house? Oh, yes, I've no doubt he's got you all right. He's a looker, and girls are all alike."

Kathleen did not condescend to notice this thrust. Her eyes turned back to gaze upon the road as it flew beneath their car. "Don't lie awake planning to avoid Mr. Sidney," she said quietly. "He will probably always see you first; but from the moment you tell mother about this petty little scene we've just passed through, you need never come to me for assistance in any line. I shall not give it to you."

Stealing a side glance at his sister's face, Edgar Fabian knew that she meant what she said.

"Supposing," she went on presently, "that you had smoothed over an awkward moment, and that we had had tea in Aunt Mary's egg-shell cups, and had let that brave fellow think he was giving us pleasure, and that you had

## *Heirlooms*

sung something to his mandolin in your charming voice; — think of the difference in situation to us all. Instead of four hurt people, scattering, and feeling awkward and ashamed, we should have given the stranger in a strange land a little housewarming to begin life with here.”

“Not four hurt people, if you please,” retorted Edgar with bravado; but he was surprised, and somewhat affected by his sister’s picture. His charming voice would doubtless have increased the host’s respect for him.

“I expect sometime, of course,” he went on with a superior air, “to be a patron of the arts to a certain extent. If the cowboy makes good, and learns to keep his hands off his betters, I may do something for him yet.”

Kathleen’s risibles were not easily stirred; but now she laughed low, and so heartily that Edgar’s inflation over her compliment to his voice became as a pricked balloon. She even wiped away a tear as she ceased.

“Philip Sidney is going to interest the patrons of art,” she said at last.

“What makes you so sure?” asked Edgar with a sneer. “His physique?”

“His sketches, his superiority to his circum-

### *The Inner Flame*

stances, and his behavior to Eliza," returned Kathleen composedly.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed her brother. "I'd like to see myself saddled with that gargoyle and a wild-cat, in an unfurnished stable on a dismal afternoon."

"Yes, you've shown your sympathy and assistance in a manly and powerful manner," said Kathleen, as the car stopped before the brown-stone front of their home.

"Sarcasm, Miss Fabian," returned her brother, as he assisted her to alight, "is the cheapest and meanest of weapons. Each one to his taste. That state of things suited him. It would n't suit me. That's all. It takes all sorts of people to make the world."

Mrs. Fabian was in the drawing-room, and as her children entered she looked up expectantly, then her face fell.

"I told you to bring Phil back with you to tea."

"I forgot it, mother, really," said Kathleen. She sat down and began taking off her gloves. "But he could n't have come."

"No," added Edgar. "He had a guest; your friend Eliza Brewster was there with her cat."

## *Heirlooms*

"Eliza!" echoed Mrs. Fabian, sitting up. "Is she going to cook for Philip?"

"No," said Kathleen. "She is going to Brewster's Island to-night."

"I tried," added Edgar, "to get her to send you the cat as a souvenir, but she refused."

"I'm glad she is leaving town," said Mrs. Fabian. "She is a very ungrateful person and I detest ingratitude. Moreover, a person who is in an anomalous position is always annoying, and Aunt Mary made Eliza so much a member of her family that the woman does n't know her place. What was she doing over at Phil's?"

"Overseeing the moving in of Aunt Mary's dunnage," replied Edgar.

"Why! Has he more than one room?" asked Mrs. Fabian with interest.

"No, mother," said Kathleen, in a tone designed to offset Edgar's sprightly scorn. "He has just one, and nothing in it but piles of Indian blankets and a table and chair."

"The chair for Eliza, mind you," put in Edgar, "while Kathleen and I were stowed on the floor."

A spark glowed in the girl's eyes as she regarded her brother. "He let you sit on a barrel, I remember," she said.



## *The Inner Flame*

"Oh, yes," returned Edgar; "and speaking of barrels," he went on, a belligerent spark glowing in his eyes, "a ripping thing happened. All this old stuff came over while we were there, and among them a barrel of dishes. Well, Sidney opened it and began taking out the things, but instead of the coarse stuff Eliza had meant to give him, there were gold-banded china, and colonial silver tea-things —"

Mrs. Fabian's backbone suddenly seemed of steel. "Aunt Mary had a few fine old things," she interrupted.

"Well, there they were. She'd given Sidney the wrong barrel. You should have seen her face. She was ready to faint."

"You say she leaves to-night?" Mrs. Fabian's eyes were looking far away through the wall of her house toward Gramercy Park. "Philip won't want the care of those delicate old things," she added. "I'll get some proper ones for him in the morning."

Edgar laughed gleefully, none the less that Kathleen's lips were grave.

"If I were you, mother," said the girl, "I would let them work it out. Eliza seems to have taken the helm over there."

"Of course she has," agreed Mrs. Fabian

## *Heirlooms*

sharply. "Taking is Eliza's forte. That china and silver belonged to my grandmother. If Aunt Mary did n't have enough thoughtfulness to leave it to me in writing, is that any reason it should not be mine?"

"Aunt Mary knew," said Kathleen, "that you had everything you wanted."

"Everything I needed, perhaps," retorted Mrs. Fabian, with excitement, "but I certainly want my own grandmother's things; and Providence has thrown them into my hands. I shall explain everything to Philip and he will be glad to have me take them. Is n't he all that I said he was, Kathleen?"

"He is very interesting," returned Kathleen quietly.

Then she rose and went to the door. Edgar followed her uneasily to the foot of the stairs.

"I'm not going to peach, Kath, don't worry," he said. "I'll keep the compact. I just wanted to prove to you that I knew the *mater*."

His sister turned on him. "I told you that you should have been the girl and I the man," she said; and he winced under the contempt of her look. "If mother gets those things tomorrow, the result for you will be just what I promised. I shall never be at your call again."

## *The Inner Flame*

"You said —" began Edgar, perturbed.

But Kathleen ran swiftly upstairs. Her brother returned to the drawing-room.

"What's the matter with Kathleen?" inquired Mrs. Fabian. "She behaved so strangely."

"Oh," returned Edgar, shaking his head as if exasperated beyond patience, "Kath's a stiff. She can't see a joke if she runs into it. Now, I think that barrel business was funny, don't you?"

"It's something more than funny," returned Mrs. Fabian impressively. "It's Providence, as I said."

"Well, now, I'll wager," declared her son argumentatively, "that if you take the law into your own hands and bring that old truck over here, Kathleen will cut us both."

"What in the world is the reason? Was she so impressed with Philip? I think he's irresistible myself, but Kathleen is so unimpressionable — and beside, he won't disapprove."

"I'm not so sure. He treats Eliza as if she was the one best bet. I don't pretend to know all Kath thinks. She's a high-brow and a crank. Do you suppose she'd look at a man unless he was a college professor? I guess not."

## *Heirlooms*

"Don't speak of your sister so, Edgar. You have reason to be grateful that she is not an ordinary silly flirt."

"Flirt!" ejaculated Edgar, with rolling eyes. "Do you suppose she'd sit on the stairs with anything but a Latin book, or flirt with anything but a microscope?"

"Well, then, you don't have to worry about her?"

"Don't I!" retorted Edgar laconically.

"I must say," pursued Mrs. Fabian virtuously, "it is too much for Kathleen always to expect me to hold her judgment superior to mine. I shall do in this matter what I see fit."

"Then it's all up with me," observed Edgar.

"What do you mean?"

"She'll visit it on me. She always does." Edgar was beginning to wish that he had not played with fire. "Beside, in this case, Eliza says that old stuff belongs to her; is hers to do as she pleases with."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Fabian, with righteous indignation. "Possession is nine tenths of the law; and if I get that possession we'll see what the law can do for her!"

"Oh," protested Edgar petulantly, "why do you want to bother with it?"

## *The Inner Flame*

His mother's eyes were glistening. In fancy she saw the convenient barrel in which was compactly stowed Aunt Mary's little store of heirlooms.

"Because," she answered with dignity, "genuine old things like that are not to be despised. They would be just the thing at the island."

"That's what Eliza thought," said Edgar drily.

"The idea," exclaimed Mrs. Fabian, "of her using such things in the sort of home she'll have!"

"Perhaps she'll console Mrs. Wright with them," said Edgar. "You were pitying her last night for her winter exile."

"If she did, Mrs. Wright would give them back to me at once," declared Mrs. Fabian; "but never mind, there will be no need now. Providence has thrown them right into my hands. Occasionally you can see justice work out in this world."

Edgar looked toward the portières. Kathleen might return. There was no sign of any one approaching, however.

"Well, I'm in wrong with Kath for having spoken of it, then," he said. "Let me have

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twenty, will you, mother? You can afford to on the strength of the heirlooms."

"I can't, Edgar."

"Ten, then; you owe me that much, I'm sure."

Mrs. Fabian's lips took a tight line.

"You know, Edgar," she said impressively, "your father has forbidden me to give you money. He says you must learn the worth of it."

The youth shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and throwing himself into an easy-chair, stretched his legs toward the blazing logs and stared at the fire with the gloom of one who feels that he has killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. He had not, however, told of Eliza's insult and his own wrathful departure from the stable. He could defend himself to Kathleen so far, when next they met, and it might possibly soften her heart.

When Philip Sidney bounded up the stable stairs, he came in upon Eliza, who was standing as he had left her, and with such a woe-begone expression that, meeting her tragical gaze, he burst into a peal of laughter.

### *The Inner Flame*

"Oh, Mr. Philip, Mr. Philip!" she mourned.  
"I've spoiled everything."

"What! Let the kettle boil over?"

"No, no; you'll make light of it for my sake; but I've turned the Fabians against you! That pert little bantam will go home and tell his mother everything, and it'll make a lot o' difference. They might have been lots o' use to you."

"Don't borrow trouble, Eliza. I'm not going to have our last visit spoiled. I don't make use of my friends anyway; and beside, I'm going to be too busy to have any. Come, now, make the tea. I want to see you drink so much that you 'swell wisely before my wery eyes.' Shall we use this fine old silver jug?"

"Mr. Sidney." Eliza wrung her hands.  
"You're awful smart and strong; can we get this barrel headed up again and off to the depot to-night?"

"Why," Phil hesitated, "I suppose so, but would n't you rather have your tea in comfort now, before we go out to dinner, and let me do the barrel to-morrow and send it off?"

"There would n't be any barrel," returned Eliza darkly. "Not unless you packed and sent it before you went to your school."

"Why not?"

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"You heard me tell 'em right to their face," said Eliza.

"Oh, surely," protested Phil, "you don't think Mrs. Fabian would do anything high-handed?"

"Would n't she, though?" returned Eliza. "She has n't got over it yet that Mrs. Ballard sent your mother a diamond pin and did n't leave her anything."

Phil looked puzzled. "Why did n't Aunt Mary remember Aunt Isabel?" he asked.

"To tell the truth, I don't think Mrs. Ballard meant to slight her. She just did n't think anything about it. She knew Mrs. Fabian was rich, and did n't suppose she'd care for any of her little things. Your mother always acted human toward her, and was her namesake, and 't was natural she should send her something."

"Well, well; have a cup of tea anyway." Eliza's pallor went to her host's heart. He went to the window and brought in the lemon and sugar.

Eliza followed him with her eyes.

"Do you think you can, Mr. Sidney?" she asked, her hands interlocked.

"Can what?"



## *The Inner Flame*

"Do the barrel. I'll never forget it of you," she said fervently.

"I can't believe there's any necessity for such haste. Pat's a good watch-dog so far as thieves are concerned."

"You don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Sidney. Trust me, it's my only chance to save the dishes; and I tell you she might have the whole kit and boodle of 'em and welcome, if she'd been kind, or even decent to that little angel. 'T ain't the silver and things I want. It's to keep 'em away from her."

Phil could see that Eliza was trembling in her intensity. She had shaken her head until she had again loosened the grey locks about her gaunt face.

"I don't care anything about anything to eat, Mr. Sidney," she went on. "I can head up the barrel myself in some kind of a way, but it's got to go to the depot or else I don't, and my berth's all paid for."

"How did you ever happen to be born in New England?" returned Phil meditatively, noting her clenched hands. "You and Bernhardt would have been rivals. Settle down comfortably now. Make the tea and I'll head up the barrel after you have used one

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of these cups. If necessary, we'll ride on the wagon."

"Oh, Mr. Sidney, *can* we ride on the wagon?" exclaimed Eliza in a frenzy of gratitude.

Phil laughed. "Anyway, the barrel shall leave here to-night. I'll take one of my brushes and do such high-art addressing that it will follow you meekly to the island. Don't you worry another moment. I guarantee it."

"Then it'll have to leave here before we do," persisted Eliza.

"It shall leave here before we do. Now, are you satisfied?"

Eliza heaved a deep sigh of relief and proceeded to make the tea.

Phil was inclined to be impatient with her fears; but the next day, when he returned from the Academy, Pat met him with a grin.

"Sure ye're the divil of a bye," he said with an expansive gesture. "I'll have to put on a biled shirt every day to resave yer company. 'T was no less than the Queen o' Sheby came to see ye this mornin' an' you not gone tin minutes."

"A lady—the one who was here yesterday?"

"Sure 't was no slip of a girl in a big hat to-day. 'T was a queen, I'm tellin' ye. She rolled

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up in her motor car an' come here an' knocked on me door, an' me without a collar on. She was dressed in furs an' looked like she owned the earth.

"‘I wish to see Mr. Sidney,’ says she.

"‘Thin ye’ll have to go farther, mum,’ says I. ‘Ye’ll find him at the paintin’ school,’ says I.

"‘She did n’t need any paint herself, I’m tellin’ ye. She got rid in the face while she was talkin’.

"‘I’m his aunt,’ says she, haughty-like, ‘an’ as long as I’m here I’ll see his room,’ says she; an’ wid that she wint up them stairs like they belonged to her. I heerd her movin’ around, an’ I hurried to button me collar an’ slick up. Presently I dropped the comb, for I heerd her comin’ back. Before she’d got away downstairs, ‘What have ye done wid the barrel?’ says she. ‘What bar’l?’ says I. ‘The wan Mr. Sidney had here last night,’ says she. Thin I remembered there was wan. ‘It moved out,’ says I, ‘wid his company,’ says I. ‘What company?’ says she, and her eyes snapped the way I expected to hear her say, ‘Off with his head!’

"‘A lady,’ says I, ‘wid a cat in a basket. ‘Twas a reg’lar movin’,’ says I.

"‘She bit her lip, and muttered: ‘Just like

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her!' I heerd her plain, though she was n't lookin' at me no more. Take an auld man's advice, me bye. Kape away from the Queen o' Sheby for a while; an' if ye don't tell me what was in that bar'l rollin' up an' down stairs like a restless soul, I'll be havin' the nightmare, sure."

Phil laughed, and shook his head. "The ways of women, Pat," he said, "are so far beyond me that I can't even guess."

"Can't guess what was in the bar'l? Tell me, now, or ye'll not git the key to the park nor meet yer sweetheart."

"There were dishes and silver in that barrel, Pat. Each of the women thinks she owns them."

"I'd bet on the Queen o' Sheby," said Pat.

"You'd lose, then," returned Phil, running upstairs.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ARRIVAL

ELIZA BREWSTER reached Portland in time for breakfast; and the hours she must spend before the one afternoon boat started for the island were embarrassing ones on account of Pluto. She had a cup of coffee and an egg in the station, and then lifted her heavy basket on the car and rode across the city to the wharf.

Setting the cat at liberty she followed him about, and held him on her lap, alternately, until passengers were allowed to board the steamer. The captain and purser were new to her. She glanced about the cabin as she sat, her arms clasped about the basket, out of whose window Pluto's eyes were again glowering. Eliza dreaded recognizing some one she knew; but no recognition occurred, and she had ample time in the two hours' ride to meditate on past and future. Many years had fled since she last saw Casco Bay. She and Mrs. Ballard had spent a couple of weeks at Brewster's Island one summer, but it had been their farewell to out-

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ings further from home than Coney Island. She had not enjoyed the experience because of wrathful resentment at the neglect of Mrs. Fabian, then a bride; but Mrs. Ballard had revelled in the natural beauty which feasted her soul. Eliza evoked the memory now and smiled grimly with satisfaction at the consideration that the precious barrel was safely starting on its journey after her.

She met her cat's green gaze through his wire window. "If I set more value on my life than I do, Pluto," she muttered, "I'd risk it on Mrs. Fabian visitin' a certain stable this mornin'. Then Mr. Philip 'll know, and he'll forgive me."

Her heart warmed as she thought of the jolly kindness of her late host; of his assiduity and care for her comfort; of the milk he had fed to Pluto, and the hot beefsteak to herself.

"That supper last night cost him a lot o' money. I know it did!" she thought remorsefully, "but," with a revulsion of affectionate concern, "I hope he'll eat good and not slight himself when he's alone. There's such a lot of him to nourish."

It was the sort of dismal weather which inspired the description, "No sun, no moon, no

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stars, November!" and Eliza dreaded the return to her old changed home. Her heart beat a little faster as the steamer ploughed along, each minute bringing her nearer to that especial hill rising from the waters of Casco Bay where she first opened her eyes to life. Memories of those dead and gone assailed her until her eyes stung.

"I'd like to know," she thought sternly, "if there's as ungrateful a critter in the universe. S'posin' I was goin' to the island to nobody? S'posin' I'd been seen off in New York by nobody? That's what I'd expected to happen two weeks ago."

Eliza gazed rebukingly at the steam radiator in the middle of the cabin until her tears ceased.

She had not slept much in her unaccustomed bed on the sleeping-car, impeded by the heavy basket and her own hand-bag, and the fear of how Pluto might behave at the stops; so the boat ride seemed long, and it was with relief that she at last heard the summons:—

"Brewster's Island. Land from the lower deck."

"Praise be!" she thought. "I have n't got to lug my things upstairs."

There were but few passengers to get off at

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this island, and but few persons standing in the raw air on the wharf.

There was a lump in Eliza's throat as she carried her burdens up the gangplank, but through the mist in her eyes she saw a face she recognized. It was lean, and smooth-shaven, and had scarcely grown more lined in twenty years. The man met her gaze with alert scrutiny and then looked beyond her for some one. The gangplank was drawn in.

"James," said Eliza, when she had swallowed.

The alert, searching eyes returned to her, and looked, at first, without recognition.

"Don't tell me you don't know me, James," added the traveller, trying to laugh.

"Why, Eliza Brewster, I was runnin' over ye," said the captain in hasty amazement. "You — you've grown some spare, Eliza. Just at first I did n't see who 't wuz." The kindly speaker endeavored to conceal his dismay. "Amazin' how a little flesh off or on'll change a body," he added. "Here, let me take your bundles. Carriage right up here waitin' for us. Mrs. Wright sent me down to meet ye. Kinder homely day, ain't it?"

"That's a cat, James," said Eliza as he



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seized the basket. "You see, I'm a real old maid, travellin' with a cat."

"Well, it's all right, I s'pose," returned the captain gallantly, as they walked up the wharf toward the waiting carry-all; "but 't would 'a' been more to the point if ye'd brought somethin' that was kind of a rarity on the island. We could 'a' supplied ye with a cat fer every day in the week, black, white, malty, whatever ye wanted. Well! how ye been, Eliza?"

"I guess you can see," returned Eliza laconically.

"Well, well," said Cap'n James. He helped her into the carriage and followed. "Git ap, Tom. Mrs. Wright 'll fat ye up in no time. She says you're goin' to stay with her."

"Yes, for a while I am." Eliza's eyes were travelling over the familiar rolling landscape. "How does she make out here?"

"Don't seem to complain none. Mr. Wright has settled down like a round peg in a round hole. Brewster's Island 's good enough for him."

"My, my! How it's changed!" murmured Eliza as one unexpected roof after another rose into view.

"I s'pose that's so," agreed Captain James.

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"You can't stay away even from one o' these islands a dozen years or so without seein' the foot o' man encroachin'. It's good fer trade, Eliza, good fer trade. Lots o' the roofs ye see cover empty cottages now, but come summer time the place swarms all right. The Fabians got enough room to swing a cat in. Nobody can come very near them; but the rest o' the island's pretty well dotted here and there."

"It don't look like the place I was brought up," said Eliza.

They had reached the height of the road now, and her wistful eyes fell on a cove which pierced the island's side. Its softly rising banks were studded with evergreen trees, standing black above the black water. A threatening sky hung sullenly over all.

"'Tain't the place you was brought up," returned Captain James cheerfully. "It's a darned sight more prosperous place. While the summer folks are restin' up, we're makin' hay and cuttin' ice, as ye might say; and come fall we get shet of 'em and go back to a quiet life. No one can't say this ain't a quiet life, can they, Eliza?"

Captain James reined in the horse before taking the Foster Hill, and compassion showed

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in his kindly eyes as he turned and watched the grey face of his passenger.

"Eliza Brewster used to be a pretty girl," was his pitiful thought.

She kept silence, her pale eyes resting on the dark waters of the cove, austere quiet in the windless twilight.

"Feels like snow," said Captain James. "S'pose you could snowball now, Eliza? I know when we were youngsters you could hold yer own with any boy on the island."

"That's my one talent, James," responded Eliza drily. "I can hold my own yet."

The captain smiled with relief at this sign that some of the old spirit lingered behind that haggard face.

"By cracky," he said, "I'll bring up a bob-sled after the first snow, and we'll toboggan downhill again, Eliza. Never say die. Git ap, Tom."

The carriage started up toward a long low white house on the summit of the ridge. Four bare Balm of Gilead trees stood sentinel before it in a waste of withered grass. Beyond rose the gnarled boughs of a struggling apple orchard, beside which a tiny house with blank uncurtained windows stood beneath the forlorn guard of two more gaunt bare trees standing ready for

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the conflict with winter winds, and bearing the scars of many a battle past. Back of the little building was a shallow field inclining downward to the open ocean which held the island now in its black, mighty embrace, creeping with a subdued roar upon the cold rocky sands.

"Say, Eliza," said Captain James, as the tiny deserted cottage came into view, "was we afraid o' Granny Foster, was we? Say!"

The speaker turned and interrogated his passenger with a twinkle.

A wan smile rewarded him.

"Afterward Jenny used it for chickens, Mrs. Wright says," she returned.

"Yes; but there never was an old hen there that come up to Granny Foster, you bet."

"How long ago does that seem to you, James?" asked Eliza, after a pause.

"As if 't was yesterday," he responded valiantly.

His memory was picturing the little girl in plaid gingham and sunbonnet who could outrun any boy on the island. That sunbonnet was never in place, but always hung down Eliza's back, the strings tied at her throat. Captain James remembered to have thought there was something very pleasing about that throat.

## *The Inner Flame*

"It seems a hundred years ago to me," said Eliza quietly.

"Whew! You must 'a' lived fast in New York," returned Captain James. "That's an awful record."

"Do you suppose I'll ever get used to the stillness again, James? I believe if a pin was to drop in this grass you could hear it."

"Guess Nature 'll make rumpus enough for ye before long," returned the captain. "You've never tried it up on this hill, Eliza. I guess when the pebbles and rocks begin draggin' around below there at high tide, you won't miss the elevated trains none."

The horse was climbing slowly and patiently as they talked, and a woman within the old farmhouse was watching the ascent from a window. Now the watcher disappeared, and presently the house door opened and a figure came out on the stone step.

"There's Mrs. Wright now. Git ap, Tom."

A gleam came into Eliza's pale eyes. It was an attractive figure that stood there in dark blue gown and white apron. The silver aureole of hair framed a smiling face. Eliza grasped the handles of Pluto's basket.

"To think that after all the years I should

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have a homecoming on this island!" was her grateful thought.

"Here we are," called Captain James cheerfully as they approached; "little box, big box, bandbox, and bundle, and the cat."

Mrs. Wright approached as the carry-all stopped.

"Did you really bring a cat, Eliza?" she asked, laughing.

"Why, — why," stammered Eliza, "it never once came to me till this minute that perhaps you don't like cats!"

"I like everything alive," was the response; and the speaker looked it, as she received the cat-basket, and Eliza stepped out on the grass.

"But does Mr. Wright?" inquired Eliza in perturbation. Was it Pluto's destiny to become a wild-cat after travelling by land and sea!

That gentleman now appeared, stout and with tousled hair, which suggested that he had just risen from slumber.

"This is Eliza Brewster, Morris, and she has brought us a pet," said Mrs. Wright pleasantly.

The host shook hands with the newcomer with sufficient grace and eyed the basket curiously. Captain James looked benignly on the group.

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"Eliza and me have been lookin' backward as we came along," he said. "We used to race and tear around this hill — she says 't was a hundred years ago, but don't you believe it. I'm goin' to bring a bob-sled, first snow, and sail her down the hill and make her think 't wa'n't more'n yesterday that we did it last."

The smile on Eliza's haggard face but made her fatigue more evident.

"Where's the trunk, Cap'n James?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"I'm goin' to fetch it right up. Git ap, Tom."

"Hurry in, Mrs. Wright," said Eliza, her care-taking instinct asserting itself. "You'll take cold."

"Not a bit of it," was the reply as the hostess led the way in; "I never take anything that does n't belong to me."

There was a cheerful fire blazing in the living-room and Eliza was at once seated before it and made to feel for a second time like an honored guest.

"I'll let Pluto out, first thing, if you don't mind," she said, and unfastened the basket.

Mr. Wright, his eyes indolently curious under the rumpled grey hair, watched the proceeding.

"A Manx cat," he remarked as the prisoner

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leaped out. Pluto's green eyes blazed in the moment that he stood and looked about him.

"Here, poor thing," said Eliza, "your troubles are over. There's a fire such as you've never seen in all your days."

But the outraged cat scorned the fire, scorned even Eliza's caressing hand. Leaping from her touch he descried the lounge; and thanking the gods of his Egyptian ancestors that at last he had reached a place where furniture accorded hiding-places, he dashed into the darkest corner its valance concealed.

"He's kind o' put out by all he's been through," said Eliza apologetically.

Mr. Wright went to the couch and stooping lifted the valance.

"Shall I get him for you?" he asked.

Two green eyes blazed at him from the darkness and a vigorous spitting warned him away.

"Please just let him sulk a little while," said Eliza hastily. Supposing Pluto should inaugurate their visit by scratching the host! Awful thought! "He's a real good cat in his way," she added.

"Well, I'm certainly not invited under the lounge," said Mr. Wright, straightening up.

"I did n't know anybody to give him to,"



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went on Eliza, still apologetic. "Mr. Sidney said he would have taken him if he'd known."

"Mr. Sidney. That's Mrs. Ballard's young artist, is n't it?" asked Mrs. Wright, who was boiling a kettle over an alcohol lamp at a tea-table in the corner of the room.

"Yes — we spent our last day with him in his stable."

"His what, Eliza?"

"His stable. He's found one for a studio in a real stylish place up in Gramercy Park where the folks have gone to Europe. He's as tickled as if he owned the whole big house."

"I'm glad he's found a place to suit him. You like him very much, don't you, Eliza?"

"He could n't be any better," said Eliza simply. "We'd 'a' had a real nice visit only the Fabian children came in, Edgar and Kathleen."

"Oh, how are they?" asked Mrs. Wright with interest.

"They seemed to be all right. I had n't seen 'em for years."

Mrs. Wright remembered Eliza's criticism of Mrs. Fabian on the occasion of the call she made upon her in New York.

"Just turn your head," she said, "and you can see right from where you are sitting the fine

## *The Arrival*

cottage Mr. Fabian built here five years ago in place of the old one his wife owned."

Eliza turned and looked out the window. Far across the field and an intervening wall she could see a house built of boulders, low and broad, and obtained glimpses of its wide verandas.

"It's a charming place," went on Mrs. Wright, "and they have a delightful small yacht. We became acquainted with them during the last fortnight of Violet's stay in the summer and she had a few fine sails with them."

Here the hostess rose and brought Eliza a cup of fragrant tea.

The guest started. "The idea of your waitin' on me, Mrs. Wright," she said humbly.

"Oh, making tea is fun, Eliza; and I want you to drink that before I take you to your room. This is n't any steam-heated apartment, as you remember."

As she spoke, Mrs. Wright took a cup of tea to her husband, who was sitting on the couch, occasionally lifting the valance and peering beneath, apparently vastly entertained by the feline explosions with which Pluto, his sharp teeth bared, spat at the intrusion.

"You won't put your hand under, will you,

### *The Inner Flame*

Mr. Wright?" asked Eliza anxiously. "Pluto's so quick you'd think 't was lightnin' struck you. I'm ashamed of him with this good fire; but he had an awful time with boys once and that's where his tail went, and I don't feel to blame him so much as if he had n't ever suffered any. He's scarcely seen any men except Mr. Sidney. He was clever to him always, but I don't know as Pluto 'll forgive him now for shuttin' him up in the basket. Oh!" Eliza heaved a sigh of relief, "I'm so glad we've got here."

"I've put an oil-stove in your room, Eliza," said Mrs. Wright, as all three sat sipping their tea.

"That's real nice," returned Eliza. "Mr. Sidney's got an oil-stove. I do hope he won't smoke up everything. I tried to scare him, — told him he'd ruin his pictures."

"We shall watch to see him make the success Mrs. Ballard expected," said Mrs. Wright kindly, seeing that Eliza's heart was much with her dear one's heir.

"He could n't make anything but a success," responded Eliza.

Presently her trunk arrived and was carried into the bedroom which Mrs. Wright had arranged for her. It was on the ground floor. All

## *The Arrival*

the second story of the house was to be left unused in the cold weather.

In the evening Captain James came back a third time to play checkers with Mr. Wright. It seemed to be a daily custom; but soon after the supper dishes were washed, Mrs. Wright insisted on her tired guest getting into bed for a long night's rest.

Pluto had leaped to the shed and thence out into the black darkness of the cloud-laden night.

Eliza went to the door to call him, but her most ingratiating invitations were ignored.

"Oh, go to bed, Eliza," said Captain James, who had just opened the checker-board. "What ye 'fraid of? 'Fraid he'll jump off the bank? He ain't fond enough o' the water, I'll bet. Go to bed and don't worry. Have n't ye ever heard the song, 'The cat came back, he could n't stay away'?"

"You know, James," said Eliza, ashamed of her anxiety, but nevertheless too much affected by it to seek her pillow while her pet was homeless, "you know it's places, not people, with a cat, selfish critters."

"Well," responded the captain, "he can't get back to New York 'cause the walkin' 's so

## *The Inner Flame*

poor." As he spoke, a dark shadow passed into the light that streamed from the window.

With the quickest movement of her life, Eliza jumped off the doorstep and pounced upon it. It was Pluto, and she held him under her arm with a vice-like grip as she reëntered the house.

"Good-night, all," she said, rather shame-faced.

"Good-night, Eliza," said Mrs. Wright, who had taken up a book. "Your lamp is lighted."

When Eliza had reached her room, she closed the door and dropped the cat, who leaped toward it, and finding exit hopeless, looked up at her, night-fires gleaming in his eyes.

"See here, Pluto," said Eliza severely, "will you stop actin' so crazy? I tell you we're home; *home*. If ever two folks ought to be filled to the brim with gratitude it's you and me. I'll give you a chance to look around here in daylight and get your bearin's, and then, if you don't behave as if you had some sense, I'll put you in the chicken-house and you shall live there. Do you hear that?"

She stooped to smooth the jetty fur to offset in a measure her severity; but Pluto glided from beneath her hand and took refuge beneath the bed.

### *The Arrival*

“Well, of all the fools!” she soliloquized. Nevertheless she knew what the temperature of the room would be by the small hours, and, taking an old knitted grey shawl from her trunk, she threw it under the bed.

## CHAPTER XI

### MRS. FABIAN'S GIFTS

MRS. FABIAN had taken her daughter to the train before she appeared to Pat's amazed eyes at the stable door. Her chagrin at discovering the removal of the barrel did not prevent her recognition of the discomforts of Phil's north-lighted chamber. Her nostrils dilated as she looked about her at the rumpled pile of blankets where the artist had evidently slept; the unlighted stove, and the open windows through which came an eager and a nipping air.

"Poor boy! Poor boy!" she said to herself repeatedly.

She had had an unpleasant fifteen minutes with Kathleen in the motor, for the girl had asked her directly if she intended to kidnap the missent barrel, and she had replied in an emphatic affirmative.

"Would you rather have those old dishes than Mr. Sidney's respect?" Kathleen asked her.

Mrs. Fabian looked her surprise. "It sounds

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

very absurd to hear you call Phil 'Mr. Sidney,'" she said, fencing. "Don't you remember your Aunt Mary Sidney?"

"Indeed, I do."

Mrs. Fabian's mind was of the sort which associates social status indissolubly with money. She had always felt that in winning a millionaire for a husband, she had married above her; and, shaking off her own humble family connection wherever possible, had tried to be as nearly all Fabian as circumstances permitted. Her step-children had therefore never been expected or requested to adopt her relatives as their own. She now referred to the one memorable visit of Phil's beautiful mother to their island home, for Kathleen's persistent formality in referring to the artist brought a flush to her cheeks.

If Kathleen, the proud, the reserved, the self-contained, were to pronounce upon the young man unfavorably, she should have nothing to say to the contrary, though she would continue to be kind to Mary's child in private.

"I was only thinking," she continued, "that if you still remember his mother in your thoughts as your Aunt Mary, it seems rather formal to tack a Mr. upon Philip. You know,



### *The Inner Flame*

Kathleen," Mrs. Fabian's flush deepened, "I did not ask you to go to see him. I wanted Edgar to go, for the looks of the thing, since Phil is an entire stranger, and when I found he never would go by himself, I was thankful that you took him. You have been so — so grouchy ever since, that I'm sorry you went; but I don't see why you should blame me for it. It was your own proposition."

"I know, mother," returned the girl; "and if you will promise not to go over there and take the tea-set I'll not be grouchy." The dark eyes lifted wistfully to Mrs. Fabian's astonished countenance.

"What do you mean by my forfeiting Phil's respect?" she asked. "Do you mean that he wants them so much? Why, they'll be smashed or stolen in that rough place. They'll be nothing but a nuisance to him."

"They belong to Eliza," pleaded Kathleen.

"They belong to me!" retorted Mrs. Fabian explosively. "Philip will see that at once."

Kathleen's lips closed. They had arrived at the station, and she said no more; but she departed with one consoling thought. Mrs. Fabian had misdirected herself and Edgar the day before. Perhaps she could not find the

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

place to-day; but that lady, as soon as the car door was closed on her child, spoke through the tube to the chauffeur.

"Drive," she said, "to the same place in Gramercy Park where you took Miss Kathleen yesterday."

Soon she was face to face with Pat, and presently standing in Phil's forlorn apartment. The pieces of Mrs. Ballard's bedstead were still leaning against the wall.

She pictured Kathleen the fastidious, the dainty, perching on that pile of blankets; but if the girl had despised the poverty-stricken art-student, why was she so strenuous and persistent as to retaining his respect? Why had she left for the studio in the best of spirits, and returned distraught, behaving in an absent-minded manner ever since.

"Kathleen is a great deal more tender-hearted than she appears. I believe she pitied Phil so much it made her blue, and she could n't bear to have me take away the only pretty things he had. Well, it seems I'm not going to!"

Mrs. Fabian even opened the closet door. A few suits of clothes hung within, but the rest was chaos; and in that chaos no welcome curves

### *The Inner Flame*

of a barrel were to be found. Her alert eyes made a hasty but comprehensive search of the room.

"The boy drank his coffee out of that mug!" she decided. "He is not in a mountain camp and he shall not live as if he were. He shall see that he is not dependent on Eliza Brewster for the decencies of life!"

Then followed her descent upon Pat, her catechism, and her magnificent departure.

Scarcely had Phil received the Irishman's account of the visit and gone up to his room that afternoon, when he heard a knocking on the stable door; and when Pat had opened it, a violent expletive from somebody.

Phil stood still to listen. Surely he could not be connected with the present invasion, whatever it might be. His circle of acquaintance in Gotham had come, done its best and its worst, and departed for all time.

"Misther Sidney, sor," yelled Pat from the foot of the stairs. "'T is the barr'l come back. Sure, and is it worth while totin' it up, whin it can't be at rest!"

"It is n't for me," called Phil, coming out in his little hallway. "I refuse to live in such a whirl of excitement."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

"It is fer you, else all the money spint on me eddication is gone fer nothin' — and faith there's more to follow," added Pat, in a tone of such sudden surprise that Phil ran downstairs faster than he had gone up. A couch was approaching the stable door. This was followed by several large packages, upon one of which was tied a letter, and at last a Morris chair entered upon the scene.

"Ye're the very soul of extravagance," said Pat severely, when the delivery man had departed. "If ye're a poor art-shtudent, say so; but if ye're a prince in disguise, out with it!"

"This is a surprise party if I ever had one," declared Phil slowly, staring around at the objects.

"Poor art-shtudents don't buy iligant couches with box springs long enough fer the lord mayor!" said Pat, unconvinced. "What brings ye to a stable whin ye've the Queen o' Sheby fer an aunt?"

At the word a light illumined the situation.

"For a fact, Pat! You did tell me my aunt was here!" And in a flash Phil's mind reverted to Kathleen with a sensation of gratitude. In some way she had prevented the disagreeable details of yesterday from angering her mother.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Give me a hand up, Pat," he said. "I'll guarantee this barrel will stay where it's put."

When they had all the articles upstairs, Phil found himself possessed of a springy bed with ample clothing for the night, and ample couch cushions for day; well-selected dishes, alcohol lamp and copper kettle, and a table on which to stand them, a reading-lamp, and the easy-chair.

"What do you think of it?" he said, looking about half-dazed.

"I think ye're in the wrong box, bein' in a stable," answered Pat, scratching his head in perplexity.

"No, no," Phil laughed; "a box stall for me. Wait till you see me scattering paint around here."

"Faith, I have me doubts o' you," said Pat.

His Irish dislike of voicing the unpleasant withheld him from expressing his thought; but as he regarded Phil now, standing coatless, and with tossed hair, looking about his transformed apartment, he decided that he was viewing the black sheep of a wealthy family, the masculine members of which had left him to his own poverty-stricken devices, while his softer-hearted female relatives were surreptitiously ameliorating his hard lot. It was difficult to see Phil in

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

the rôle of black sheep, but Pat was sophisticated and knew that appearances were deceitful.

"Pat," said the perplexing tenant suddenly, "I begin to believe I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I'm the happiest fellow in the world."

"Sure a man does n't say that till his wedding-day," objected Pat.

Phil smiled confidently. "I told you I had the girl; and she's the faithfulest of the faithful."

"You bet she is," returned the Irishman devoutly. "Whatever you've done, the gurr'l gets her hands on you once 'll niver let go."

"Whatever I've done? What do you think I've done?" laughed Phil. "Here's my mother. Want to see her?" And he sorted several leaves from the pile of sketches and laid them out on the new table.

"It's swate she is!" said the Irishman, gazing with interest; and, perceiving the expression in the artist's eyes as he looked upon the pictures, he spoke suspiciously: "She ain't the gurr'l ye're talkin' of?"

"No, no," returned Phil, "but she entirely approves of the match."

## *The Inner Flame*

"That helps, ye know," said Pat benevolently. "'Tis well to get airily settled in life, thin if" — he made a lenient gesture — "if ye've played too many cards or made any other mistakes, ye soon lave thim behind ye and there's little time wasted."

That evening Phil called up the Fabian house, and, finding that Mrs. Fabian was to be at home, soon presented himself in that lady's boudoir.

Mrs. Fabian, in a becoming *négligée*, sat before an open fire; a soft lamp at her elbow, and a French novel in her hand.

"You know the naughty things in a French story are so stimulating, Phil," she explained, when he commented on her book. "You would n't think of reading the same things in English; but you get so curious to know what it's all about, that you work, and study, and I find it very helpful. Excuse my not rising to greet you. I've had an exhausting day; so as Edgar was n't coming home, and Mr. Fabian had to attend a banquet, I had my dinner brought to me here."

"I'm sure it is I who have exhausted you," said Phil, drawing his chair close to the luxurious downy nest which was embracing her

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

plump person. "I don't know what to say to you, Aunt Isabel," he added gratefully, regarding her as she half-reclined, a living example of what can be accomplished by beauty-doctor and accomplished maid.

She placed her white hand, with its perfect rosy tips, for an instant on his, then she patted the folds of her violet gown.

"Now, don't say a word, my dear," she returned, complacency lighting her countenance. Her husband had little time for compliments, Edgar was uniformly ungrateful, and Phil was very handsome. She remembered how charming had seemed to her the relation between him and his mother; and she felt a longing to evoke something like that affection for herself.

"But, indeed, I shall say a great deal," he declared. "You've turned my camp over there into the lap of luxury. I go on accepting things, everybody seems in a conspiracy to prevent my having any hardships, so I suspect I'm going to catch them at the school."

"Are n't the teachers agreeable?"

"Well, I've been there only a few days, but I see already that doctors disagree there as they do elsewhere. One comes and tells you you're all right, and the next declares you're all



## *The Inner Flame*

wrong; but I'm after the fundamental training I've never had, and I'm going to get it if I make their lives a burden to them."

"I don't pretend to know anything about art, Phil," said the hostess complacently, "and I'm not going to add that I know what I like, either, so you need n't smile at the fire; but from those sketches of yours that I saw out at the mine I could see that you were bound to accomplish something if you had free rein. Kathleen was delighted with them."

"I was much pleased to meet Miss Fabian," said Phil.

"Dear me, why should you children be so formal!" exclaimed his hostess. "'Miss Fabian'! 'Mr. Sidney'! It's ridiculous when you consider your mother and me — more like sisters than cousins as we are."

Philip bit his lip. The description struck him as diverting, considering the lapse of years during which his mother had heard nothing from this cousin.

"I shall be very glad if Miss Fabian will let me know her better," he said.

"It's a very, very strange thing, Phil," went on Mrs. Fabian, shaking her waved head and gazing at the fire, "to be a step-mother. I

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

should have always said that environment was more powerful than heredity; but I've had those children almost from babyhood," — the speaker challenged Phil with impressive eyes, — "and yet I look at them, yes, I assure you, I look at them as a hen might look at the ducks she had hatched."

Phil saw that he was intended to respond, so he changed his position and made a soft, inarticulate exclamation.

"Those children," declared Mrs. Fabian, "would probably both claim that they understood me from *a* to *z*; but I am frank enough to state that I understand neither of them. Now, I'm going to tell you, Phil, that I am hanging great hopes upon your influence over Edgar."

"My dear Aunt Isabel!" ejaculated the visitor. Phil's gratitude to this relative did not blind him to her characteristics, or as to how her idle and fashionable life had reflected in the bringing-up or coming-up of her son.

"Now, don't say no, Phil," she went on. "I don't expect that you found any kindred spirit in Edgar, but I'm going to be frank, his father is so out of patience with him that he is severe, and I am hoping that the sight of your economy will show Edgar that something beside extrava-

## *The Inner Flame*

gance can bring happiness; and the sight of your industry will rebuke his idle tastes."

"I can't conceive of myself as an example to the young," laughed Phil uncomfortably. "I half suspected yesterday that you had been holding me up before Edgar. There are n't any comparisons to be made between a gilded youth and a painter, and I assure you it is no lofty principle that makes me care little where I live and eat. It is only a desire to do a certain thing, so intense that it dwarfs every other need."

"He has overpowering desires, too," said Mrs. Fabian bitterly; "but it is to go yachting and play polo and drink champagne." She sighed. "I suppose I have n't known how to be a good mother," she added with dejection, "but there," — her voice grew suddenly argumentative, — "look at Kathleen! I've brought them up alike, but she is the other extreme. She has no taste for pleasure. She's a natural student and bookworm; and what I am to do with her when she graduates, Heaven only knows. I shall insist upon her coming out," added Mrs. Fabian virtuously. "She must go through the same form as the other girls in her set, and it may be that a reaction will set in and she will find a normal satisfaction in it. It will break my

### *Mrs. Fabian's Gifts*

heart if she drops out and becomes one of these poky oddities. Well," — another sigh, — "I must n't borrow trouble. Were you surprised at my early morning call at your room, Phil? I hoped I should be early enough to catch you."

"I was surprised; but it was a lucky visit for me, even though I was not there."

"I'm glad you're pleased with those little comforts; but I shall be frank, — it was to try to get my grandmother's silver that I went. If you had known you were working against me, Phil, you would n't have helped that crazy Eliza to carry the things away."

"They belong to her, she tells me," said Phil simply. "Aunt Mary seemed to think you were living in an embarrassment of riches anyway."

"Then you should have shipped them to your mother. It's quite indecent that a servant should have them. It reflects upon your mother and me. Can't you see that, Phil?"

He stirred his broad shoulders uncomfortably.

"I'm glad you are n't going to blame me for it anyway," he returned, looking at his hostess with a frank smile. "After all they're only *things*, you know. The important part is how Aunt Mary felt about them, is n't it? You

### *The Inner Flame*

know probably what sort of thoughts she had about you in her last days."

Mrs. Fabian looked at him with quick suspicion as he rose to go. Was he rebuking her in spite of his smile?

"Some people marry into a family," she said after the pause. "Some marry out of one. I did both. I married a man with children, and a big establishment. I simply married out of my family. I did n't have time to attend to both, and any right-minded person can see where my duty lay!"

The virtuousness in the speaker's face and voice were so enveloping that they created an atmosphere in which Phil was able to make his adieux without further embarrassment.

## CHAPTER XII

### MRS. FABIAN'S DINNER LIST

FOR the next two months, Phil, to his entire satisfaction, had practically no social life. One or two of his fellow students found their way to the stable studio, envying him loudly when they viewed it, but for the most part he succeeded in keeping his castle to himself. Aunt Mary's easel found a good situation beneath the north light, and the evenings were spent in reading works calculated to help him on his way.

Occasionally the satisfactoriness of his lamp or his easy-chair would cause him to start in a panic and begin to figure how long a time had elapsed since he had called on his benefactress; usually discovering that it was high time to go again.

Frequently he declined invitations from Mrs. Fabian to dine, giving the excuse of incessant occupation. Once in a while, on the occasion of these duty calls, he saw Edgar, and the latter prided himself on the subtle implication of injury which he infused into the perfunctory courtesy of a host.

## *The Inner Flame*

Phil saw it, and, while he was amused, he gave Edgar some credit for not having carried out the threat to tell his mother how Phil had guarded her dignity with Eliza.

"So there are some things too petty for him, after all," thought Phil carelessly; but he suspected and was grateful for Kathleen's intervention.

When Edgar was not in evidence, Phil rather enjoyed an evening with his aunt. It gave him an opportunity to talk about his mother, and Mrs. Fabian could tell him events of their girlhood. She soon found that no occurrence in which Mary Sidney had figured was too trifling to bring the light of close attention into the young fellow's eyes.

"Dear me," she said one night when they were alone together, and she had been entertaining him with reminiscence, "I wonder how your mother made you love her so."

There was a sincere wistfulness in her tone that touched Phil. He laughed with some embarrassment, throwing a glance around the too-gorgeous room.

"I don't believe she went for to do it," he said. "I contracted the habit early."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

"But Edgar was only five years old when I married his father," said Mrs. Fabian plaintively.

"We did n't have any money," said Phil. "Perhaps that helped. Mother and I were pals, you see; had to be. She could afford only one maid."

"It's true I was very, very busy," admitted Mrs. Fabian thoughtfully, with the return of her ever-ready tone of virtue. "I had the best nurses and governesses. They could n't speak a word of English, — and I did n't neglect the children. I made it a point to hear them say their prayers every night that I was n't going out."

Phil's clasped finger tips were pressed to his lips and he did not reply to this. He admired Mrs. Fabian's exquisite costumes, and now he dropped his twinkling eyes to the hem of her gossamer gown.

"How often do you write to your mother?" pursued Mrs. Fabian.

"I'd be ashamed to tell you," he answered.

She sighed. "It's beautiful," she declared; again wistful. "I suppose she has told you about our dear old dull island."

"Brewster's Island? I don't remember her



## *The Inner Flame*

talking of it; but Eliza has spoken of my mother having been there."

At the mention of her humble enemy Mrs. Fabian's nostrils dilated. "Eliza!" she repeated indignantly. "Every time I think of the impudence of that woman —" she paused, at a loss for words.

"I suppose the island was named for Eliza's family," hazarded Phil.

"I suppose so. You may call nearly every islander 'Brewster,' and seldom go wrong." Mrs. Fabian continued: "Edgar made a joke of the barrel affair, but Kathleen put on tragedy airs at the idea of my trying to get my own. Kathleen knows so much more than her mother, you understand. She knows so much more about everything than she will ten years from now. It's rather painful. Well, of course you didn't realize what you were doing in helping Eliza spirit the things away. I'm glad the creature has gone, for your sake. She would have been a dreadful bore to you as a part of Aunt Mary's legacy."

"I feel very kindly toward Eliza," said Phil. Aunt Mary's letter was against his heart where it always lay. "She did too much for Aunt Mary for me ever to forget it."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

"But you did n't know Aunt Mary."

"Not until she had gone. Then she revealed herself to me in a letter. I seem to have seen her at her patient work."

"Yes, and Eliza has probably told you that I neglected her." Mrs. Fabian colored and looked at Phil defensively.

"Yes," he answered simply.

"It's a wonder she did n't make you hate me. I know what a virago the creature can be."

"I like," said Phil, — "I like that saying, 'Yesterday is as dead as Egypt.' I like to feel that the only enemy a man can have is himself."

"I'm glad you don't hate me, Phil," returned Mrs. Fabian, again plaintive. "I have enough troubles: 'Qui s'excuse, s'accuse,' and I shall not try to explain to you why I saw so little of Aunt Mary; but it is beyond belief that a common creature like Eliza should dare to sit in judgment on a person in my position."

"Eliza is not a common creature," said Phil quietly.

"I see. Her devotion is all you think of. We won't talk of her, then. — What are you going to do in the summer, Phil?"

"Work!" he answered, smiling.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Not under that stable roof. I won't permit it."

"Then I'll take the road. There's nothing I know better than how to be a tramp."

At this juncture Mr. Fabian came in from his library. He was a smooth-shaven man, comfortably stout; and the stern lines on his forehead and about his mouth softened at sight of Phil, who rose to greet him.

"What of the mine?" asked the newcomer, seating himself.

"Oh, father's digging away," returned Phil. "He probably tells you more than he does me."

Mr. Fabian drew his brows together.

"Not sick of the picture business yet?" he asked, regarding the young man curiously.

Phil shook his head and laughed. He knew Mr. Fabian's disapproval of his chosen profession.

"I was just about telling Phil," said Mrs. Fabian, "that he must visit us at the island next summer."

Mr. Fabian nodded cordially. "Care for sailing?" he asked.

"I never had a chance to know. Horses and tramping and camping have given me all my outings so far."

"Then you must come. We'll have a cruise.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

I've only a small yacht, for I prefer to run it myself with a few friends."

"That sounds attractive, but I shan't indulge, I think."

"Why, what sort of a painter is it who does n't do marines?" asked Mrs. Fabian.

"Yes, I know," returned Phil, smiling. "I'll do them at Coney Island."

When he had taken his departure Mrs. Fabian turned to her husband.

"Is n't it a shame," she said, "for a boy like that not to have any money?"

"No," responded her husband. "It's in his favor. The shame is that a fine husky chap like that should give himself over to paint-pots. I'd make a position for him in the office if he'd come. I wish I had a son like that."

When her husband made this sort of reference, Mrs. Fabian was glad that she was not Edgar's own mother; yet since she had known Phil she had never entirely escaped a consciousness that Mary Sidney would have bent the twig in Edgar's childhood in a manner to have produced a different inclination in the tree.

As Christmas approached, Mrs. Fabian detained her son one evening as he was about to leave the house.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Edgar, you are always in such a hurry," she complained. "I never can catch you for a word except at table when the servants are about. Sit down for five minutes."

The youth paused reluctantly. "I must keep my engagements," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "and since the Administration has shut down on my using the car at night, I have to live by my wits; in other words, sponge on other people's motors as much as possible."

"You know, dear," said Mrs. Fabian, "your father did n't do that until we found, evening after evening, that we could never have the car ourselves. Somehow or other, Edgar, you manage very badly. You always rub your father the wrong way."

Edgar's chest in his dress shirt rose very high. "I'm not the cringing, begging sort," he returned. "Unless a thing is offered me freely I don't care for it."

In the last month he had affected a short, pointed mustache, and this he now twisted with a haughty air.

Mrs. Fabian's sense of humor was latent, but she smiled now. "Sit down a minute, dear," she said. "It won't detain you, for you may use the car to-night. Your father has just

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

'phoned that he is obliged to attend a sudden meeting of directors, so I have to give up the opera — unless you will go with me?"

Edgar regarded his mother's charming toilet appraisingly. "I don't mind," he said graciously, "if you will ask Mrs. Larrabee. I was going there to call to-night."

Mrs. Fabian's brow clouded. "She is so conspicuous," she said persuasively; "I wish you did n't go there, Edgar. Why are all the men daft about her when there are so many sweet young girls so much better worth their attention?"

"Shall I see if she is disengaged?" asked Edgar alertly. "If she cares to go I can come back and talk with you."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Fabian sighed resignedly; and Edgar disappeared, presently returning, a self-satisfied smile curving the little mustache.

"She was gracious, evidently," remarked Mrs. Fabian.

"Says she was saving this evening for me anyway, and will be delighted," said Edgar, seating himself. "She says she is glad it is a Caruso night, for she can prove to me that I ought to be on his side of the footlights."

## *The Inner Flame*

"That's the way she does it, is it?" returned Mrs. Fabian.

"Oh, she means it," declared Edgar quickly. "She's the most sincere creature alive. Everybody knows that."

"Where is Mr. Larrabee? I've never seen him yet. Does anybody see him?"

"His clerks, I fancy," returned Edgar, with his careless, gleeful smile.

"It's really a pity the woman's so well connected," said Mrs. Fabian. "She is insolently daring. Did you tell her you were taking me?"

"I told her you were asking her to be so good as to accept an impromptu invitation; that you had but just found that you could go, yourself."

Mrs. Fabian sighed again. "Well, Edgar, then I have earned a few minutes of your time. I'm going to give a dinner for you and Kathleen while she is at home for the holidays. I thought of Christmas night, with a little informal dance afterward; and I want you to help me decide on the list."

"Mrs. Larrabee?" suggested Edgar, twisting his mustache complacently.

"Certainly not," returned his mother, with energy. "This is to be just for your and Kath-

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

leen's young friends — a simple Christmas merry-making."

"Could n't you let me off?" asked Edgar, with his most blasé, man-of-the-world air.

"Don't be absurd, Edgar Fabian. Have you no interest in helping to make your sister's holidays pleasant?"

"My dear mother," protested the young man, "in order to make Kath's holidays pleasant, all you need to do is to give her a pair of blue spectacles for a Christmas gift, and invite a few Columbia professors to engage her in light conversation. If I should send her roses, she would only analyze them and reel off the learned names of their innards."

"Very well; I am giving you an opportunity to suggest some names if you care to. Of course I shall ask Philip Sidney."

Edgar shrugged again. "Do you suppose he has any evening clothes?"

"And Kathleen suggested Violet Manning," went on Mrs. Fabian. "Do you remember Mrs. Wright's niece? Her life must be a dull one."

"So it is to be a dinner party of derelicts," said Edgar; "a charity affair."

"Kathleen is always thoughtful," said Mrs.



## *The Inner Flame*

Fabian reproachfully. "As it is to be on Christmas Day I don't know that trying to give pleasure to some people who don't have much usually would be so far out of the way. I'm not sure about Miss Manning myself. Kathleen has suggested once or twice that, as we saw quite a little of her at the island, it might be well to show her some courtesy here; but, as I say, I'm not quite sure. What I am sure of is that I will not allow you to speak of Philip Sidney slightly in my presence."

Edgar looked up in some surprise.

"A derelict, indeed," she went on. "I wish I might ever hope to see you bring the look into your father's eyes that they hold when he sees Phil."

"You choose a fine way to make me like him!" answered the youth; but beneath his carelessness was a twinge which proved that the words went home. "I remember Miss Manning now. She sailed with us a few times."

"Yes, and she lives here with some girl students in a bachelor-maid way, and teaches —"

"I remember the whole thing!" interrupted Edgar. "She dances."

"What! The stage?" asked Mrs. Fabian.

"No; some sort of school business; more on

### *Mrs. Fabian's Dinner List*

the gymnastic order. Of course, I remember her. She did a jig once on the boat."

"Oh, I don't think we'd better ask her," exclaimed Mrs. Fabian hastily.

"Yes, put her down," said Edgar. "If we're going into the charity business, I greatly prefer worthy girls who can jig; and for the rest, you and Kath fix it up. Christmas is a sort of a lost night anyway. I don't mind."

And with this gracious coöperation Mrs. Fabian was fain to be content. Although she felt somewhat dubious about sending an invitation to Violet Manning, she concluded from the vivacity in Edgar's countenance, as memory awakened, that the purchase of his interest was worth the risk.

Mrs. Fabian did not care for sailing, and she had but a vague memory of an inoffensive girl who arrived at the island as Mrs. Wright's niece. She hoped Miss Manning's propensity for jigging would not be the cause of any shock to the carefully nurtured buds who were Kathleen's friends.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CHRISTMAS

It was shortly after this that a miniature riot broke out in the tiny apartment where Violet Manning and her two friends made a home; and it was on the subject of Christmas, too.

The year before, Violet had spent the holidays with Mrs. Wright in Boston; but this year the loving letter which she now held in her hand invited her cordially not to come to the island.

"I want to see my little girl," wrote Mrs. Wright, "but I would rather risk the sort of days you will spend among the many pupils who are sure to ask you than to let you take the expensive journey to the island, so bleak and cold as it is, and with nothing to repay you at this end but a hug from Aunt Amy."

Violet read this aloud, and her two friends listened attentively.

"I told you," said Roxana, the teacher and the eldest, "that Mrs. Wright would n't let you come. I shall stay here with you." She spoke

## *Christmas*

firmly. Her face had the lines of one who always spoke firmly.

"Then I shall stay, too," said Regina, the art-student.

"Then you'll make me miserable, girls!" ejaculated Violet energetically, folding her letter back in its envelope. She was sitting on the table, a favorite perch not to be despised in that box of a room where she often said one must either be under the table or on it. She swung both her slippered feet and her blonde head. "Roxy — Rex —" she added beseechingly, "do you want to ruin my holidays?"

"Rex can go, it's very foolish for her to talk about staying, when she can go sleighing in the country and study the shadows on the snow," said Roxana.

"What's the use of being a bachelor girl if you can't have any independence?" inquired Violet, her blue eyes, and full, pretty lips looking stormy.

"The baby bachelor can't have everything she wants," said Roxana. "You're the baby bachelor. Rex may do approximately as she pleases, but I am the only one entirely independent. Rex still waves her hair. I stopped a year ago; just forgot it. That was the rubicon.

## *The Inner Flame*

Have you heard of the old colored mammy who deplored the failure of her dear but mature miss to marry? She said to her consolingly: 'Never mine, honey, I've known some old maids who settled down right happy and contented when they stopped strugglin'.' I knew when I forgot to wave my hair that I'd stopped 'strugglin'." Roxana rocked gently. It was the only safe way to rock in that apartment. "So when that time comes, Violet, you will see that you have earned independence."

"Oh, Rox, don't be so unkind," pleaded Violet. "I've had ever so many invitations for Christmas dinner from parents. I knew my small admirers slapped them into it, so I refused; but I give you my word that if you will go ahead with your Christmas plans, I will write to one of the most ardent, and Cinderella's coach will be nothing compared to the limousine that will be sent for me Christmas morning, and nothing will be lacking but the prince to make the story complete. If you don't promise, I'll sulk all the holidays, and I won't stay with you either. I'll go skating in the park."

Roxana smiled meditatively.

"Prince!" repeated Regina ecstatically. "That reminds me of mine again."

## *Christmas*

“Oh, help!” exclaimed Violet. “I’ve reminded her of Mr. What’s-his-name. Rex, if you’ll promise to go ahead with your holiday doings, I’ll let you tell us again how He came into the class-room first, and how He chose the best light, and how His sketches were always stunning, and how hard it was for you not to sketch Him instead of the model, and I’ll let you show me the head you did of Him on the sly, and you shall tell us again how you plotted for an introduction and how you did n’t get it, and—”

“Oh, hush up,” said Regina good-naturedly. “How about that Mr. Fabian you met at the island? How about the careless elegance of his manners? How about that wonderful, heart-rending, angelic voice in which he sang on moonlight sails?”

“Dear me!” said Violet, swinging her feet and smiling with mischievous eyes, “what a wonderful memory you have! I had forgotten all about him.”

“It shows what a superior being he considers himself that he has allowed you to,” retorted Regina, with curling lip; “after the way he behaved at the island—”

“I never said he behaved,” interrupted Violet mildly.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Well, he kept on asking you to go, every time they sailed, and gave you every reason to think he was friendly."

"That's summer friendship," returned Violet, but her cheeks took a deeper rose. The shoe pinched.

"Well, it's settled," said Roxana. "Rex proceeds to the farm and studies snow shadows. I stay here, and sleep as late as I wish in the morning. Now, be calm, Violet. It is n't as if I had a home to go to. It would n't be all holiday to visit, and be on my best behavior, and not be sure which fork to use nor how large tips I ought to give the servants, nor —"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Violet. "It will do you all the good in the world to sit down in the lap of luxury for a while; to live in large rooms, and drive in large motors, and eat large dinners, and lounge on large divans, and sleep in large beds; and you're going, Rex, you're going."

There was something like tears in the stormy blue eyes, and Regina heard with relief the postman's whistle.

"Go down and see if we have anything, will you, Violet? I'm fixed so comfortably, and it's nothing to hop off the table."

Violet obeyed, and the other bachelors saw

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her press a very small handkerchief to her eyes as she went.

"You'd better go, Rox," said Regina in a low tone. "I know just how she feels."

"If it were n't for Christmas day I would; but I am sure Violet won't accept a pupil's hospitality for more than an hour, just so she can tell us she went; and the baby shan't spend Christmas eve and Christmas night alone. Even if she won't speak to me, I shall stay. It's the lesser of two evils. Honestly, I would enjoy a lazy time at home here with no papers to correct. The trouble is to get her to believe it."

Here Violet returned; her face and bearing so laden with dignity that Roxana coughed lest she laugh. The baby bachelor handed a post-card to Regina, then took a very straight-backed chair. To sit on either of her customary thrones, the table or the floor, would be too much concession to her mutinous companions. She opened the letter in her hand, and as she read, a curious change altered her countenance. The wintry stiffness of her expression began to thaw. A springtime warmth appeared in her eyes, and, spreading to her lips, relaxed their corners. At last she looked up. The sparkle of summer seas shone in her glance.



## *The Inner Flame*

"You can go, girls," she said; "it is all right. Mrs. Fabian has asked me to dinner on Christmas, with a dance afterward and to spend the night. Now, then!" She challenged Roxana triumphantly.

"How about Christmas eve?" inquired the latter inflexibly.

"You tiresome old dear, the Settlement has a tree and I'll attend it, and spend the night with one of my class who is interested there."

"Then I'll go," agreed Roxana mildly. "Fled is the rosy dream of sleeping till noon and watching you skate in the afternoons; and I will ask Mrs. McCabe across the hall to keep an eye on you."

The invitation came as a welcome event to Philip Sidney as well. Aunt Isabel had been uniformly kind and motherly to him. The thought of a solitary Christmas, or one spent in a glittering restaurant, made him wince even with all the allurements of his easel and his books; so at last Mrs. Fabian received a grateful reply to a dinner invitation.

The roses that came with his card on Christmas morning pleased her also, more than her extravagant gifts. While Phil was dressing he thought again of Kathleen. He had never seen

## *Christmas*

her since the Sunday afternoon visit. He felt he could put up with Edgar's airs and graces through a dinner for the sake of seeing Kathleen again.

"I wonder if she'll smoke a cigarette to-night," he thought, while he adjusted the dress tie he had bought for the occasion: adjusted it very carefully, for the tie was a unique possession. If he made a botch of it he could not go to the dinner. The girl never came to his mind except when her mother spoke of her; but now that he was to be her guest he recalled agreeably how womanly and sweet had been her manner to Eliza on that autumn day before the stable had turned into a studio.

It was Kathleen who suggested sending the car for Violet. It was not the traditional Christmas of dry sparkling snow under a radiant moon, but a day of slush and clouds, and Kathleen was not of those owners of motors who believe that every one else has one, too. Her acquaintance with Violet was slight, but she knew she was a teacher and a very young one. She fancied that dollars were precious with her as yet.

So Violet rolled up to the brown-stone house on Christmas evening in state, arrayed in her

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best and full of anticipation. Mrs. Wright's gift to her had been a small gold pendant holding a turquoise matrix, and this she wore on a slender chain around her throat, where it shone between the deep blue of her eyes and the pale blue of her gown.

Kathleen's greeting to her had a ring of friendliness through its gentle formality. Violet's involuntary thought was that she might have been less formal, for, although there was nothing chilling in her manner, it seemed to suggest the difference between the bachelor maid doing light housekeeping in a hemmed-in apartment and the heiress of this stately mansion.

Mrs. Fabian was kindly patronizing, and held Violet at her side that she might meet the other dinner guests.

Edgar Fabian was one of the last to enter the drawing-room. Violet noted that he was not alone, but although his companion dwarfed him she saw no one but the well-set-up, exquisite youth with the shining hair who had been the companion of her moonlight sails. Her heart quickened and her color deepened.

"I'm behaving exactly like Rex," she thought impatiently. Really there had been

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no reason why Edgar Fabian should take pains to find her in the city or show her any courtesy, after the return from the island, but in her heart of hearts she had expected he would; and it showed no proper pride in this same heart to give an undignified bound at the present juncture. What was the idiotic thing bounding for anyway?

This query she put to it as Edgar approached his mother; and now Violet saw that his companion was a tall man whose evening clothes could not lessen the breadth of his shoulders, and whose poetic face was lighted with alert, observant eyes.

Mrs. Fabian greeted the stranger warmly, and presented him to Violet as her nephew, Mr. Sidney; while Edgar's cool eyes swept the girl's face for a brief moment without recognition.

"You remember Miss Manning, Edgar," said his mother; and then the sudden gleeful smile relieved the youth's face of its superciliousness.

"What a difference feathers make to the bird, Miss Manning!" he ejaculated. "Upon my word, I think I must have believed you always wore a jolly little red sweater and hat. Were n't those corking sails we had? Awfully

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glad to see you again." And he bore Phil off to meet his friends.

"I think, Miss Manning," said Mrs. Fabian impressively, "that in meeting my nephew you have seen a future celebrity. He is wonderfully talented."

"How pleasant," murmured Violet, the idiot heart having given one record-breaking bound and then retired into its usual self-effacement.

"Yes, he is a painter. Only a student as yet, of course. I think he has the sort of originality that longs to spread its wings and fly; but he holds himself down to foundation work in the most level-headed way."

Violet's eyes followed the easy movements of the athletic figure.

"Studying art, did you say?"

"Yes."

"I did n't quite get his name?"

"Sidney. Philip Sidney."

Stars began to twinkle in Violet's eyes at her sudden enlightenment. What would Rex say?

Kathleen Fabian's observing eyes found time to follow Phil, too. He wore his dress clothes more like one accustomed to inhabit palaces than stables. She saw girlish eyes brighten as Edgar personally conducted the Westerner

## Christmas

about the room. When she planned to sit next him at dinner, it had been with a thought of protection; as Edgar had been lavish of prophecies of the probable *gaucherie* of the cowboy. She also had believed it quite likely that the mining engineer did not possess a dress suit; and Edgar had drawn cheerful pictures of the way his arms and legs would probably protrude from any which he might rent; but it was quite evident now that Phil had a good tailor and had not spent all his evenings in a mountain cabin.

Kathleen had suggested to her brother that he be seated beside Violet Manning, as there would be no other man present whom she had ever seen, but Edgar vetoed that plan.

“Let the two derelicts go in together,” he had said. “I never did see any sense in this business of social philanthropy. Let the lonely people take care of each other. They will if you only have the cleverness to bring them together. Then you’re spared all the boredom yourself, and kill two birds with one stone.”

“My dear,” his mother had said, “Miss Manning is an orphan, alone in the city, and you were quite friendly with her at the island —”

“Yes, but I don’t want to talk about the island all the evening. There are some widows I

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would consider; but when it comes to orphans — orphan teachers — count me out.”

He smiled the gleeful smile, and Kathleen sighed, and allotted him to the maiden of his choice; one who knew and hated the enthralling Mrs. Larrabee, and who, he averred, had enough “pep” not to bore him.

Violet had somehow expected to be placed with Edgar at dinner, and argue with herself as she would, the surprise of finding herself with a stranger instead gave her the sensation of a slight; but she was cheery and natural, and her escort, a youth with long lashes and a sallow complexion, found the sea-blue eyes intelligent and sympathetic repositories for his mournful rhapsodies upon Kathleen Fabian’s charms.

She was sitting across the table from them beside Philip Sidney. Aqua-marines glistened water-blue about her bare throat, and filmy lace clung to her satin shoulders. Her simple coiffure was in contrast to the puffs and curls that danced airily on the other girlish heads. Kathleen’s was straight hair, but fine, thick, and lustrous. The simplicity of her aspect gave one to know that with her “the colors seen by candlelight” would look the same by day.

“It is n’t every one who understands Miss

## *Christmas*

Fabian," the long lashes announced to Violet, with the implication that he was in the inner circle. "She's what I call a subtle girl — a mysterious girl. Those jewels suit her. That liquid, elusive play of light, as the moonlight sparkles on the water, is like her moods, gentle, and — and remote. I often think Miss Fabian lives in a world of her own. One can't always be sure that she hears what one is saying."

"I know her very little," returned Violet, "but she does seem a very thoughtful girl."

"Who is that chap with her? — the big fellow?"

"That is her cousin, Mr. Sidney."

"Her cousin? I never saw him before."

"I fancy he's not a New Yorker," said Violet. "He is here studying art."

"H'm," ejaculated Long-Lashes. "He doesn't look the part. He doesn't wear artistic hair."

"No," agreed Violet. "There is no studied disorder in his appearance. Miss Fabian seems to hear everything *he* says," she added demurely; "and why, if he is her cousin, does she call him Mr. Sidney?"

Long-Lashes, who had looked cheered at the information of relationship, gloomed again.



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"I'm sure I have it right," went on Violet. "Mrs. Fabian told me he was her nephew."

"Oh," returned her companion, "but Mrs. Fabian is Kathleen's step-mother." He looked across at the pair anxiously. "She has adopted him, though, that's evident. Her wits have n't gone wool-gathering since we sat down."

When the young people returned to the drawing-room they found a charming transformation had taken place. The spacious floor was bare, garlands of evergreen, holly, and mistletoe were wreathed in all possible positions, and a majestic Christmas tree sparkling with the tiny electric bulbs of these sophisticated days stood in a recess. Its boughs were gay with favors for a german.

An orchestra, concealed behind palms in the hall, played a Christmas carol as the couples entered.

"There are Christmas fairies even in Gotham," said Phil to Kathleen. "Ah," he thought, "poverty may be no disgrace, but what a convenience is money!" "Before we go any further," he added aloud, "I want to thank you, Miss Fabian, for the honor you paid the stranger in a strange land by allowing me to take you out to dinner. I want you to know

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that I appreciate it in a gathering of your own friends."

Kathleen's calm eyes met his. She was glad he could not know that she had expected to champion his crude appearance in a gathering where clothes went far to make the man.

"I never thought of doing anything else," she returned; then added, smiling, "You know I owed you hospitality."

"Brave girl," returned Phil, "to dare to refer to that ill-starred day. I should never have had the courage."

"Do you ever hear from Eliza?" asked Kathleen.

"I received one letter after her arrival. It was mostly about her cat, Pluto. She said he acted like an imp of darkness."

"Why would n't he — saddled with that name?" returned Kathleen.

Phil watched the aqua-marines sparkle and dissolve on the whiteness of her neck.

"Your mother did to my stable what the brownies have done here while we were dining. Did she tell you?"

"She told me she bought you a few things."

"That is a modest way to put it. Will you

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come to tea with her some day this week and see for yourself?"

"I shall be glad to. I've not been able to remember you as being very comfortable."

The carol ceased. The odor of evergreen was fresh as the forest itself. The orchestra began a waltz.

"I wonder if he can dance," thought Kathleen, in her ignorance of the West. The evening clothes were promising but she had her doubts of Terpsichore west of the Rockies. She little knew that in dress clothes or sweater the cowboy leads the world in dancing.

The music was irresistible and in a moment she was floating away in the waltz.

"Dear me!" she thought with a mixture of consternation and satisfaction. "I've taken the best of everything!"

Edgar cast a glance after them. "A duck to the water," he thought. A touch of nature makes the whole world kin; and when Phil arrived to-night, that unique dress tie of his had suffered damage from his overcoat. Edgar with lofty hospitality had supplied the lack. It had given him a foretaste of self-satisfaction as patron of the arts, and he now felt quite benevolently glad to find that Phil was not going

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to entangle Kathleen's feet, as he sailed off with his own partner, humming the waltz in her appreciative ear.

Long-Lashes danced as he talked, with poetic meditation. Violet had no objection to him, but she was conscious of Edgar's every movement. If he did not ask her for the next dance she would not give him any, even if she had to sprain her ankle.

However, the catastrophe was averted, because he did ask her for the second, and, joy of joys, she could not give it to him; for as she and Long-Lashes crept near Kathleen and Phil during the waltz, Phil, prompted by his partner, raised his eyebrows in a request.

"The next, Miss Manning?"

She nodded assent; and so it was that Edgar took the third; and as soon as he joined her asked her opinion of Phil's dancing.

"Of course you're authority," he added tactfully, as they started.

"Oh, I quite forgot shop while I was with him," said Violet coolly; "beside, I don't teach ballroom dancing."

Edgar suspected that he had, in his own language, put his foot in it; so he used his universal panacea and sang the waltz in his partner's ear.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Pretty, is n't it? Say, you can dance, Miss Manning, if you don't know how to teach it. Watch me favor you in the german."

"Mr. Sidney is a perfect dancer," she said.

"He looks it. I'm mighty glad he does n't fall all over himself. He's a trifle too big to make that safe; and being a wild Westerner I did n't know just what he would do. Do you ever do a jig nowadays?"

"Occasionally — in the way of business."

"Say," exclaimed Edgar with enthusiasm, as he led her safely among the thickening couples, "would you do one to-night if I clear the floor?"

"Certainly not," returned Violet, laughing.

"But you did at the island."

"I only jig on a vessel's deck," said the girl.

"And I have to wait till next summer?"

"Poor, poor fellow!" Violet's eyes looked up into his pathetically. He had forgotten what very nice eyes they were, and what jolly little stars danced in their depths.

"I'd like to clog, and I believe I'd be a good one. Do you teach it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll enter the class!" declared Edgar with enthusiasm.

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"You're just a tiny bit over-age," said Violet. "Fifteen's the limit."

"Then I'll come to your home, that's what I'll do. I'll take private lessons."

"Impossible. There's no place to clog there except on the table."

"But that's what I should prefer to any other place."

"I'll teach you next summer," said Violet, "and take my pay in song."

"That's proverbially cheap," said Edgar.

"Yes, 'a song,' perhaps," returned Violet, "but I shall exact dozens."

Edgar tossed his head with the gleeful smile.

"It's a bargain," he declared.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SPRING

SPRING came all too soon for Philip after his gloriously solitary and absorbed winter.

One Saturday morning, even from his sunless north window, it proclaimed itself and would not be denied. The tint of the sky, the scanty glimpses of waving green, and the jubilant song of birds in the park, all spoke of the annual miracle.

"Just the day for a sketch," thought Phil, and buttoning his collar, he went to the head of the stairs and called Pat.

"Here," responded the Irishman, "and sure I wish it was there, thin."

"Where's that?"

"Annywhere in the country-side where I could n't see a pavement the day."

"Just what I was thinking, Pat. I'm going to borrow the key to the park again. I wonder if you'd go over to Streeter's on Fourth Avenue for me. You remember the place you bought the framed Madonna for your sister. I'd like

## *Spring*

you to get a package of materials they were to have sent me yesterday. I don't want to miss a minute of this weather for a sketch, and I can be making my coffee while you're gone."

"Sure I will. I've got to go that way for a pair o' boots annyway."

"If I get a good sketch," called Phil after him, "you may look at it for nothing."

Pat was privately not at all sure that it would be worth looking at, even if the artist thought it good. He had seen a number of Phil's efforts which looked like nothing to him, and the artist's explanation that they were merely impressions did not bring them within Pat's comprehension as being worth the paper they spoiled. Nevertheless his devotion to the artist was steadfast and he hastened on his errand.

Phil ate his breakfast, and primed two canvases for the Monday pose. Then his Streeter package having arrived, he hurriedly transferred a few pieces of charcoal and some pans of water-color to his sketch-box, and was off down the stable steps into the mellow light of spring, the park key in his hand.

"What a morning!" he thought, as he passed through the gate and snapped the lock after him. At different times when he had visited



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this enclosure with his scratch-pad, he had made mental notes of advantageous points for sketching, and he now moved straight to a chosen spot.

The gravel path winding between the patches of fresh spring green crunched under his feet and reminded him of the tar and pebble roof he had put on a barn in Montana. How different this life! How glorious! If only his mother could sit beside him while he sketched this morning.

The day was joyous as his spirit, and the park was soon alive with children and their capped and aproned nurses, truly distinguished in their right of eminent domain, while outside the hedges and railings sauntered those with no proprietary rights in Gramercy Park. A child often peeped through the fence at coveted dandelions, like a little peri at the gates of paradise.

Phil worked away, paying no attention to the more inquisitive youngsters who dared from a well-bred distance to stretch and strain for a look at what was being done in art.

He was hastily washing in a soft rose grey that was eventually to take the form of several charming old brick houses. They had dormer windows above and fascinating iron grilled

## *Spring*

balconies with long drawing-room windows and great masses of spring flowers growing in front of the basements.

Philip was working with an intensity of interest and absorption, and suddenly he threw a quantity of color and water from his brush with a quick backward motion which sent a flood over one of the youngsters who had ventured quite near. A shout of glee went up from the others of the group and he turned quickly to see what had happened, just as a girl, not capped or aproned, seized the little color-target, and wiped the moisture from the boy's face with her handkerchief.

"You, Miss Manning!" cried the artist, "and I can't spare time to rise and fall on my knees in apology."

"Ernest is the one who should apologize," said Violet, laughing, "but you know an artist out of doors is common property."

"Of course," returned Phil, washing away industriously. "Come here, little chap. I'm sorry I doused you. Come and see what I'm doing — no, not the rest of you. I can't have a heavy weight on my sword arm."

Upon this, Ernest, who had been scarlet under his companions' amusement, gave them

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a glance of superiority and moved to Phil's side.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to the object in the sketch which had been the cause of the present smooches on his blouse.

"What?" asked Phil encouragingly.

"That big tall thing that looks kind of rough, like a rock or something."

"Why, that's the Metropolitan Tower. See it there over those roofs?" Phil directed the boy's gaze with his brush-handle.

"Does n't look much like it, does it?"

"Oh, you wait and see."

"Are those going to be trees there?"

"Yes; and those spots are going to be filled with red and pink and yellow and white. You know what a tulip is? Those are the tulip beds."

Ernest leaned comfortably against the green park bench. "What are you going to make the picture for?"

"Enough questions," said Violet brightly. She was standing away a little, but mounting guard over her small charge and taking notes of the sketch for the benefit of Rex. Now she stepped forward and took the child's hand with intent to lead him away; but Phil looked smiling at the boy, and said: —

## *Spring*

"I'm going to try to paint this picture so that when any one studies it he will get its message and feel as I do to-day."

The child looked back into the man's eyes, and discerned a fellow child.

"Is it your birthday?" he asked gravely.

Phil laughed softly. "I should n't wonder," he answered. "What made you think so?"

"You look happy — and you said —" the boy did n't finish, and Phil nodded.

"Did you ever see a chrysalis, Ernest? Well, I think I've been expanding all winter. I feel sort of wingy this morning. This is a good sort of day for a chrysalis to burst, don't you think so? Perhaps this is my birthday and you guessed it before I did."

"Come, Ernest, we must go," said Violet, smiling. "We're a load on the butterfly's wings."

"Do you live here in the park, Miss Manning?"

"No. I spent last night with a friend here, and one of the maids fell ill, so Ernest and I thought we could walk about a bit and smell the lilacs."

"I don't want to go away," said Ernest. "I like to see him paint."

## *The Inner Flame*

"Just move some of that paraphernalia from the end of the bench and sit down, can't you, Miss Manning?" suggested Phil. "I piled it there in self-defence, but it's for show. Keep away from my arm, old man, and you may watch me all you like."

"Come here, Ernest, you can see just as well," and Violet, seating herself, drew the child against her knee.

The scent of moist lilacs was in the air.

"There's a robin," cried Ernest — "oh, two! Look."

"Quiet, don't frighten them," said Violet, as the bright-eyed birds ran beneath the bushes.

"Put them in, won't you, Mr. ——" began the child eagerly.

"That is Mr. Sidney, Ernest," said Violet. "It is time you were introduced and this is Ernest Tremaine, Mr. Sidney."

"I'll make you a sketch of the robin in a minute."

One of the birds ran toward the seated group, and stood a moment, proud and high-chested, his sleek head gleaming in the sun. Phil laughed to himself as his busy hand worked.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the little boy.

## *Spring*

“Cock robin. He reminded me of somebody I know. Don’t you think he looks very pleased with his red vest and his smooth feathers?”

“Yes,” replied the child. “Perhaps it’s his birthday, too.” He laughed, delighted that his big friend was amused.

“Perhaps; and see there! He has found a birthday present.”

The robin had suddenly pounced upon a worm and was digging it from its earthy stronghold.

Violet had to put her hand over the child’s mouth to still his mirth. The bird was sitting on his tail, claws dug in the ground as he leaned back, dragging at his prey.

“How good of the robins to stray away from Central Park, and bring spring to all these little places,” said Violet. “I heard one last night. Perhaps this is the very fellow. Their notes always make me think of links in a chain, link after link, alike, yet so fresh. Would n’t it be great, Ernest, if this pair are hunting for a place to build here, and would take a tree that you could see from your windows, and you could watch them with an opera-glass?”

“Do you think they will?” The child looked up into the golden-green of tender new leaves through which the mellow light was sifting.

## *The Inner Flame*

"We must ask them to hurry up," said Violet, "before the foliage grows heavy and makes it hard to watch them."

"What news from the island, Miss Manning?" asked Phil.

"Oh, spring is peeping in on them, too, once in a while. Aunt Amy says their hill will soon be white with strawberry blossoms, and blue with violets."

"And what of my friend, Eliza Brewster? I believe you told me you have never seen her."

"Aunt Amy always speaks of her in her letters. She has been a great comfort to them, so helpful and kind."

"Mrs. Fabian will have it that I am to see this wonderful island."

"You should go. It would be paradise for an artist."

"And how about yourself?" asked Phil. "You also have an aunt and a home on that green mound I hear about."

"Oh, I'm going for the whole summer," replied Violet. "I had two weeks last year, and it created an inordinate appetite."

"Then you knew the Fabians there."

"Yes, a little. In two weeks one does n't make much headway with a girl like Kathleen."

## *Spring*

"Is she difficult for a girl, too?" asked Phil.

"Oh, yes — at least for a new girl. She reminds me of a series of locked doors. You succeed in unlocking one, and the small room within merely leads to another door. You must strive to unlock that, and you succeed only to find another waiting. Such wholesome, clean, airy rooms, but small — always small. She is fascinating to me, perhaps for that very reason. Did you ever notice that even her hair is reserved?"

Phil smiled, as his busy hand worked. "Christmas night is the only time I ever saw her with her hat off," he answered. "I'm afraid you're too subtle for me."

"Oh, you'll see," said Violet; "an artist could n't help seeing in the daytime. What color do you think it is?"

"Dark brown."

"I knew you would say that. Wait till you see her in the sunshine. It's almost red; and that's just like her. Even her hair keeps everything to itself as long as it can."

Phil laughed. "Quite different from brother, eh?"

"You mean that he is frank?" asked Violet,



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with a perceptible indrawing of her own frankness.

"Well, that's a mild word for it," answered Phil. "I don't know Edgar's family crest, but the inscription should read, freely translated, 'I give myself away.'"

The speaker laughed at his own folly, and glanced up for sympathy. The baby bachelor's full lips were grave and her eyes a little dark.

"I like people to be frank," she said briefly.

Phil drew his own lips together in a noiseless whistle and his eyes twinkled at the Metropolitan Tower in the sketch.

"Keep off the grass," he mused. "I thought you said reserve fascinated you," he remarked aloud, mildly.

"One thing I don't like Mr. Fabian to reserve," said Violet, "and that is his voice."

"Great, is n't it?" agreed Phil. "I was glad he sang for us Christmas night."

"Oh, I supposed you had heard him many times. If he were my cousin I would give him no rest."

"He's not mine, you see. I'm only a step-relation, and such a long step!"

Violet bit her lip and looked at the speaker

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reflectively. She felt there was no rhyme or reason in his amused expression.

"Then, that is why you have n't seen Miss Kathleen's hair in the daylight," she said. "Have you discovered her locked doors?"

"She let me into her ballroom, at Christmas, and I think I must have been so pleased with that I did n't try to get any further."

"I see," returned Violet. "Well, if you go to the island you'll have a chance to explore. Of course your experience with her may be different from mine. Perhaps an artist will have the open sesame to her doors. I'm not a bit intellectual. I have to dance my way into people's confidence, or I don't get there."

"I hear you teach that very pretty art."

"She teaches me," put in Ernest, who was tired of being left out of the conversation. "I can dance a jig."

"Bully for you," said Phil. "Go ahead, right here on the path."

"Oh, I can't without any music."

"There's the music." Phil pointed with his brush-handle to a lofty branch where the robin was pouring forth linked sweetness, long drawn-out.

"The pebbles are too roly," said the child.

## *The Inner Flame*

"You said you'd make me a picture of the robin."

"So I did."

Phil pulled toward him another block of paper and swiftly washed in the green of the lilac bush and its purple pendants. Before it, on a little stretch of green sward, grew the robin, high-chested, alert.

"How proud he looks!" said the child, delighted.

"Yes, he is saying: 'I own the earth, and the worms therein.'" The artist laughed to himself. "'If a worm shows his head, I gobble him up! and I can sing as beautifully as I gobble. The world stops to watch and listen. I am cock robin! Look at me!'"

Artist and child laughed together as Phil handed over the wet sketch to the eager little hands. Violet's eyes were glued to it. She was wondering if later she could make a surreptitious purchase of it for Rex.

"I had heard of you before Christmas," she said. "One of my housemates goes to your art school. Regina Morris."

Phil shook his head. "I've not met any of the girls. Are you a housekeeper?"

"Three of us live together in a tiny apart-

## *Spring*

ment. I wish you might come to see us sometime."

Phil looked up with his frank smile. "I'll call on you at the island if you'll let me, and if I come — that last is such a big If, though Mrs. Fabian is determined."

"Oh, then you'll go. I've seen enough of Mrs. Fabian to know that."

"Then it must be but for a week or two. I must n't stay where I can't work."

"You'll stay," nodded Violet. "You'll live under a rock if necessary and catch fish for food."

"Are you so enthusiastic?"

"Is n't everybody?"

"Nobody, that I have heard. Eliza spoke of it like facing grim death. Edgar says it gives him the 'Willics,' whatever they may be. Aunt Isabel goes because her husband wants to sail."

"Did Mr. Fabian say it gave him the 'Willics'?" asked Violet, her cheeks rose and her eyes dark again. "Why does he go, then?"

"I did n't ask him; but a bare hill lying in a wet fog does n't sound inviting even if one may occasionally catch a glimpse of the sea. You know the sea and I are strangers."

"Did Kathleen talk to you about it?" asked

## *The Inner Flame*

Violet, the hurt spot in her pride still smarting, as memory showed her pictures of waves sparkling in moonlight, and song that turned the scene into enchantment.

"No, I believe we never mentioned the summer. She talked to me of college and I talked to her of my one dissipation of the autumn, an evening over there at the Players' Club," — Phil nodded over his shoulder toward the club windows, — "and the wit and wisdom I heard."

"I judge you have friends in the park," said Violet.

"Yes, I have a work-room over here," replied Phil vaguely. His wits were about him when he contemplated the disconcerting possibility of Ernest's sturdy little legs finding their way up his stable stair.

"I want to show this to mother," said the child, gloating over his sketch. Phil had used no anæmic colors in that. The lilacs were of a generous purple, the robin's vest a royal red. When he had thanked the artist and they had parted, Ernest prattled of his treasure as he walked on beside Violet.

"He's a proud bird," he said, half-soliloquizing after his kind. "He wants the world to listen when he sings; and his eyes are so bright,

## *Spring*

when he sees a worm coming along he gobbles him quick, and then he looks prouder than ever."

Violet's thoughts were busy, and somewhat gloomy. Edgar had spoken patronizingly to her of the big Western artist who had fallen into their family circle.

Of whom was Phil thinking that gave him so much amusement while he sketched the robin?

Violet was not sure whether her mental disturbance was more resentment toward the artist, or hurt that Edgar Fabian should declare that he had been bored at the island.

## CHAPTER XV

JUNE

DURING the long winter a strong bond of friendship grew between Mrs. Wright and Eliza Brewster. The latter's broken heart seemed to heal in the very act of caring for the exiled lady, and in the consolation of knowing that her own familiarity with the island, and with all domestic cares, gave daily return for the unspeakable benefit of her home.

Upon Mr. Wright she looked from the first with a reflective and judicial eye. He was Mrs. Wright's husband, and that fact made Eliza rigidly careful to do her duty by him; but mentally she classified the adopted islander as a lazy man who had all his days been looking for a soft spot and who had been irresistibly drawn to the freedom and irresponsibility of a life which permitted him to wear a *négligée* shirt during the semi-hibernation of the winter, and made no demands upon him beyond an occasional arising, by request, from the lounge to shovel snow-paths and bring in fuel, and at evening to play

## *June*

checkers with Captain James until an early bedtime.

He liked Eliza's cooking and her nimble, quiet ways, and externally they were at peace; but Captain James's shrewd eyes often read Eliza's suppressed impatience. One spring morning, when he met her in the island road, he attempted a mild protest in favor of the master of the house.

"Mr. Wright's a clever feller," he said argumentatively. "What's wrong with him, Eliza?"

"What have I said about him?" she snapped.

"Don't you suppose I got eyes?" asked Captain James.

Eliza was startled. She must put even greater guard upon herself.

"Now, I ain't a-goin' to talk about him, James. I s'pose it's all right for a great hulk of a man to own a dainty city woman and take her away from her friends and mew her up on a snow-bank to suit his convenience."

"What you goin' back on the island for?" inquired Captain James.

"I ain't goin' back on it. I'm island folks. I find there is something, after all, in this talk about native air."



## *The Inner Flame*

"It's treated you all right," agreed the other, regarding her countenance critically. "You've dropped off five years this winter. Come summer you'll shed ten more, like enough, and look like you ought to look, Eliza. You ain't any old woman."

Eliza ignored the blandishment.

"I can see in the glass I look better," she returned impersonally, "and it makes me mad to think it's all because I live in the house with a sacrifice. Supposin' I'd come back to this island alone."

"Mrs. Wright don't act like any sacrifice," protested Captain James; "she's chipper as a canary bird."

"Of course she is. That's the kind of a wife a man like that's sure to get. It's been my lot in life, James, to live with angels," added Eliza fiercely. "Can you tell me why I should be just as cantankerous as ever?"

Captain James laughed. "Mebbe there's as much truth in that talk about original sin as there is about native air," he returned. "You always was a limb, Eliza."

She smiled reluctantly. "I warned her before I came," she returned, grave again. "I told her I was bad, and *set*."

## *June*

“But you could n’t scare her, eh?”

“Nobody could do that. She ain’t afraid of anything above ground. ’T ain’t fear makes her yield to Lazy-Bones there; and when she sets out to make him do something he don’t want to, she gets him every time.” Eliza’s eyes wandered to a cottage by the roadside. “There’s Betsy Eaton watchin’ us. I expect she’s wonderin’ why we’re standin’ in the wet so long. Well, I’ve blown off steam and I’ll run home. I s’pose you’ll be comin’ up to-night to move those little pieces o’ wood around.”

“Sure thing, Eliza,” returned Captain James with a grin. “Lemme teach you the game so you can play it with him times when I don’t come.”

In the speaker’s own parlance he was trying to “get a rise” out of his old friend; and he succeeded. Eliza’s eyes flashed almost with the fire of youth.

“I’d throw ’em at him. I know I would — every checker of ’em.”

“Well, he’ll be fishin’ again soon,” laughed Captain James soothingly, “now his new boat’s about done.”

“H’m!” grunted Eliza; and with no other form of farewell, she started to trudge up the

### *The Inner Flame*

hill toward home. The earth was moist and yielding; the chill spring was here, and nature was drawing her green paint-brush over the high wave of the bluff. Little star-flowers bloomed under her energizing kisses, and shivered bravely when the east wind blew.

This morning the sun fell with sufficient warmth on the stone step for Pluto to lie there, and blink at the first sparrow he had seen. On the whole, Eliza's move away from New York had his entire approval. The change from the restrictions of a city flat to this place was in itself a delight, and far from agreeing with Eliza's estimation of the master of the house he found him quite the most sensible human being he had ever encountered. One who appreciated a soft lounge when he saw it, and who always made room for a cat, and never disturbed his slumbers with precipitate movement. Eliza watched their growing intimacy with grim amusement.

"Birds of a feather flock together," was frequently her mental comment.

As the spring unfolded, and the early mornings were less chill, Mr. Wright again took up his suspended practice of making sunrise visits to his pond. At first Pluto considered this a

## *June*

foolish practice; but at last he learned to connect it with attractive pieces of fish which came his way, and again he paid tribute of admiration to the hand which always discriminated so nicely just which point back of his ears should be scratched in order to establish the most friendly relations.

Eliza's threat that he should reside in the chicken-house had come to naught, for it had required but a few days for Pluto to recover from the savagery to which his novel contact with Mother Earth at first reduced him; and he again became a domestic animal full of content in the equally novel petting which now fell to his share.

One day Eliza with amused memory of her childish terrors pushed open the door of the forlorn chicken-house, and looked in; but one look was enough. She closed it again quickly on the dirt and cobwebs. Its small windows were opaque with the dust of years. It was almost picturesque with its leaking roof which had once been red, huddling close to earth under the protection of those hardy old warriors, the balm-of-Gilead trees.

"If 't was mine," mused Eliza, as she withdrew from the dirt and damp of the close

### *The Inner Flame*

interior, "I'd clean it with a good fire. It's hopeless."

A sparrow lit on the despised roof, and poured a song toward the sea.

"That's so," said Eliza looking up at the tiny creature with a smile. "It is spring. It's a wonder to be in a place where there ain't one o' your English cousins."

She turned and nearly trod on Pluto. His green eyes were fixed on the bird. His lithe body crouched in the fresh grass and quivered along its length in the intensity of his upward gaze.

"Pluto Brewster!" she exclaimed in desperation. "Supposin' you ever should catch a bird up here!" She stooped and boxed his ears. He laid them back and, blinking the eager eyes, crouched lower.

Mrs. Wright on her doorstep saw Eliza approaching, the cat under her arm.

"He was lookin' at a sparrow," announced Eliza.

Mrs. Wright laughed. "I've heard that a cat may look even at a king," she said.

"If Pluto should kill birds!" exclaimed his owner desperately.

"Would you, little tiger?" asked Mrs.

## *June*

Wright, closing her hand over the cat's face and giving it a little shake.

Pluto was beginning to consider that women were a sad mistake. He struggled to get free and Eliza dropped him.

"How the spring has stolen past us," said Mrs. Wright. "Do you realize Eliza that even June is moving on its way? Look over there at the Fabian cottage."

"Why that's James out on the veranda."

"Yes, he has had a letter from Mrs. Fabian. She wants him to open the house. To-day is Kathleen Fabian's Commencement."

"That's so," said Eliza coolly. "You showed me the invitation."

"It was rather nice of her to remember me, way off here, and little as I know them."

"I guess Kathleen would be an agreeable enough girl if she was let alone," said Eliza.

She had for some time now given up anxiety lest the high words over the barrel in Phil's studio bear bad fruit for him; for a letter had set her mind at rest on that score, and she felt instinctively that she had Kathleen Fabian to thank for that.

"But any girl would be slow to cut off friendly relations with a feller like Mr. Sid-

## *The Inner Flame*

ney," she considered, prejudice still holding her in a strong grasp.

"So they're comin'," said Eliza, in a lifeless voice. The winter had been very happy. She began to long for the fall.

"Yes, very soon."

"Is your niece comin' with 'em?"

"No; she will keep busy until July." Mrs. Wright drew a deep breath.

"Oh, how lovely this is, Eliza," she went on. "This morning makes me think of Stopford Brooke's lines, —

'A little sun, a little rain,  
A soft wind blowing from the West —  
And woods and fields are sweet again,  
And the warmth within the mountain's breast.'

Our mountain — what a height we should see we had if that sea could roll back; we can feel the warmth in its breast this morning, and the lovely miracles it is putting forth. Why don't you look happier, Eliza?" Mrs. Wright smiled as she asked the question. Her friend's eyes were gloomily following the movements of Captain James in the distance as he beat rugs on the grass beside the boulder cottage.

"I guess you know why," rejoined Eliza briefly.

## *June*

"The idea of letting anybody rob you of your happiness," said Mrs. Wright. "I shall have to put Marcus Aurelius side of your bed so you can read him before you go to sleep. I thought you were more of a philosopher, Eliza."

"You ain't half through your disappointments in me yet," returned Eliza drily.

"Ho!" exclaimed Mrs. Wright, resting her hand on the shoulder of her companion as she stood a step below her. "I have n't begun on them yet."

"Just s'posin'," said Eliza, looking about at the fair prospect, "that Mrs. Ballard could be with us to see the summer comin'. How comfortable we'd make her!"

"I don't believe she'd come," said Mrs. Wright gently, "as much as she loves us."

"That's what he said," returned Eliza musingly. "He said we had n't ought to believe we could make her happier than she is."

"He? Who?"

"Mr. Sidney."

"Good for the boy," said Mrs. Wright, who had heard so much and often about Philip that she felt as if she had met him.

"Why can't we go on here just as we have,"



### *The Inner Flame*

said Eliza regretfully. "Why must folks come?"

"Listen to the grudging one!" exclaimed Mrs. Wright lightly. "And what a different doctrine Nature is preaching us this morning. Look where you will, no limitations — none. Illimitable sky, illimitable sea. That's the way it should be in our hearts, Eliza, illimitable love."

"I dare say," returned the other with a world of obstinacy in her tone.

"The world can't be full of Mrs. Ballards, but they're all our brothers and sisters just the same. Mr. Brooke goes on in his verse to say:—

'A little love, a little trust,  
A soft impulse, a sudden dream,  
And life as dry as desert dust  
Is fresher than a mountain stream.'

I don't like that hard look to come in your eyes, Eliza. The feeling behind it turns life as dry as desert dust wherever it holds sway."

"I told you —" began Eliza slowly.

"I know all about that," interrupted Mrs. Wright, "but little by little you'll find that all hard wilfulness is flat, stale, and unprofitable. Now you'd better spend this week before the Fabians come in trying that recipe every time

## *June*

you think of them. 'A little love, a little trust, a soft impulse.'"

"And what will Mrs. Fabian be doin' all that time?" asked Eliza hardily. "Do you suppose she'll have any soft impulses toward me until I give her her aunt's things? That barrel upstairs in the back bedroom has got her grandmother's china and silver in it."

"What do you want of it, Eliza?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"To keep it away from her," was the prompt reply; and the speaker saw a cloud pass over the eyes she had learned to love. "Anyway, Mrs. Wright," she went on earnestly, "she left 'em all to me, all her things, Mrs. Ballard did."

"I see," said Mrs. Wright thoughtfully. "Doubtless her grateful heart longed to leave you her money, and deciding to do otherwise she felt she wished you to have something equivalent."

While they talked, Captain James had started across the field toward them, and now he drew near, walking beneath the bold and intricate curves made by wheeling swallows, the deep blue of their backs flashing iridescent in the sunlight.

"Say," he called, "these fellers have set up

## *The Inner Flame*

housekeepin' over there in the Fabian porch. Snug as bugs in rugs they are. Darned if I know what to do."

"Who? — the swallows?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"Yes." Captain James seated himself on a rustic bench in the sun. "It's the new wind-break they had put up last summer did the mischief. Always been too blowy other springs for 'em to try it."

"You dislike to disturb them? Is that the trouble?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"I dislike to get my head took off," returned Captain James. "Mrs. Fabian 'll have the law on me if I don't knock the nest down and clean up, and Kathleen 'll read me the riot act if I do."

The speaker pushed his hat to one side and scratched his head.

Eliza regarded him unsmiling.

"Do you always take care of their cottage?" she asked.

"Ever since they've had one," he answered. "Used to take Kathleen and Edgar out to my pound when they wa'n't knee high to a grass-hopper."

"And now she has graduated from college. Think of it," said Mrs. Wright.

## *June*

"Wa'n't I invited?" asked Captain James proudly. "I guess I was. All engraved up pretty, and Kathleen's card inside. When they fledged Edgar and shoved him out o' the nest he did n't remember me; but little sober-sides there, she wa'n't goin' to forget an old friend. Edgar's boots nor his hat don't exactly fit him, late years," went on Captain James good-humoredly, "but Kathleen always was a brick and she ain't got over it. I guess I'll let the swallers alone till she's had her say anyway."

"Going to be over there this afternoon, Captain James?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"Yes. I've got Betsy Eaton washin' the dishes and cleanin' now, and I'll be back again on the rugs later."

"Let us go over, Eliza," said Mrs. Wright. "I want you to see what a beautiful cottage it is."

Eliza looked at her with steady significance. "I'm goin' to be too busy," she said slowly.

Captain James sighed and rose. "Handsome day," he remarked, as he trudged off to dinner.

"To-morrow, then?" asked Mrs. Wright.

"No," responded Eliza firmly, freed of Captain James's presence, "nor the day after that. I ain't double-faced, Mrs. Wright. I can't go in

## *The Inner Flame*

when they ain't there, if I would n't when they are there."

Mrs. Wright laughed softly. "My square-toed Eliza," she said, turning into the house. "Oh, I forgot to say there's a letter for you here. Mr. Wright must have left it on the table."

Eliza had stooped over the row of sweet peas coming up thriftily about the house, and she rose slowly and followed her friend indoors, but when she saw the small stubbed writing on the envelope her eyes brightened. Twice before during the winter had it come to cheer her.

"Mr. Sidney!" she said, and sat down to enjoy her letter to the full.

"DEAR ELIZA," it began.

"We had a hot day yesterday. Pat's tongue hung out and he assured me that the only thing that would do him any good was to take off his flesh and sit in his bones. They tell me the summer is here to stay, and I am going to make an aisle through my opposite neighbor, the storeroom, and get at the window in there so as to get a draught through. The sun bakes the stable roof, but I would n't mind it if the perspiration did n't run into my eyes. This state

## June

of things makes me an easy prey to Aunt Isabel's kind insistence that I shall spend a week with her. She says two; but that will depend on how much fog there is and whether I have to waste time.

"I can't compliment you on being a complete letter-writer, but I judge you have had a good winter and kept from freezing. You say the islands have looked like frosted wedding cakes. The first part sounds good to me. I hope you've saved some over. That's the sort of wedding cake I'd like to dream on just now. You may believe my heart often goes homing to the mountains. What would I give for one night under the windy trees. The very stars are hot here — but — I like it!

"I've had a wonderful winter. I can't say I'm a belle at the Academy. One of the teachers turned on me the other day and said he would thank me to stop trying to teach him how to teach me. He said my 'stand-and-deliver' methods might be *de rigueur* west of the Rockies, but something less aggressive would be more becoming a student here who knew as little as I did. They all have a hunted look as they come near me; for I don't care a straw how much they snub me if I can only get from them

## *The Inner Flame*

what I'm after; and I glow with the consciousness that I have accomplished a lot, even though my strenuous path is strewn with the wounded and I have some bruises myself.

"Dear Aunt Mary! I send her a wireless every night. I wonder if she gets it!

"Aunt Isabel has been a trump to me the whole winter, patient with my neglect, and letting me go my own gait; but she brought a thermometer over to the stable in my absence one day and sat down in my room waiting for it to go up. It did n't lag, and I found her sitting there in a wilted state, and she declared that she should stay until I promised to go with her to the island and get a coat of tan. So I promised. It will be great to get a breath, and great to see you again, Eliza. Kindly arrange that the third week in June shall be free from fog. My time will be precious.

"Give my compliments to Mrs. Wright and tell her I had a pleasant chat with her niece one morning in the park while I was sketching.

"Tell Pluto to be ready to pose with you if old ocean veils himself.

"With my best to you,

"As ever

"PHILIP SIDNEY."

## *June*

"Now, then, Eliza," said Mrs. Wright when her companion had read this epistle aloud.

"Now, then, what?" returned Eliza happily.

"He'll be a link. He'll have to be. You can't be crabbed and offish and spoil his one vacation."

"Do you mean Mrs. Fabian?" Eliza gave her rare laugh as she pushed the letter back into its envelope. "If she could help her nephew from runnin' after common folks, she would; but she certainly won't run after him. We shan't clash any."

"I'm glad I'm going to see the boy," said Mrs. Wright. Violet had written of him: at first with girlish enthusiasm, but after the park interview more grudgingly. It seemed rather silly in a grown man to be so amused by the airs of a robin! For some unknown reason the memory of that foolishness had rankled for days.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PEACEMAKER

KATHLEEN FABIAN, out of school in that month of June, was at home in body, but with her mind still clinging about the scenes of her college life.

"I do believe, all things considered," said her mother when they were sitting alone one morning over their coffee, "that I am against college for girls!"

Kathleen looked up absent-mindedly from the letter she had been reading. "What's the matter?" she asked vaguely.

"You have scarcely heard a word I have said since you came home," declared Mrs. Fabian. "Your thoughts are a thousand miles away all the time."

"Not a thousand," protested the girl. "Four years is a long time, you know. To break up one's home — to break all those ties — means so much."

"Exactly what I say," retorted Mrs. Fabian. "I should like to know when you will begin

## *The Peacemaker*

again to realize that this is home, and that your father and mother would like some share in your thoughts."

"Why, I must be horribly selfish," returned the girl.

"There it is again!" exclaimed her mother, increasingly nettled. "If it takes unselfishness to show some interest in home after a girl leaves college, I say she had better not go there."

"Very well," returned Kathleen, smiling. "Don't you ever send another daughter; but I'm glad you made the mistake with me. I've been so happy, mother."

"Oh, well," returned Mrs. Fabian, somewhat mollified by the wistfulness of the girl's look and tone, "I suppose you have, and perhaps it is all for the best; but hereafter, when I speak to you, I intend to begin 'Kathleen Fabian!' and you must reply 'Present' before I go on."

"Have you been talking to me?" asked Kathleen naively.

"Well, rather. I have been telling you something that should be very interesting, considering the height of the thermometer. Father says we are to start for the island next Wednesday; and I am holding in my hand an acceptance from Philip Sidney to my invitation to go with us."

### *The Inner Flame*

"How very nice," said Kathleen courteously. Mrs. Fabian, always on the sensitive lookout where her young relative was concerned, thought she detected a perfunctory note.

"You knew I had asked him?"

"Yes, I think you did mention it before Commencement."

"He says," said Mrs. Fabian, "that you have never talked to him about the island."

"But think," returned Kathleen, "how seldom I have talked with him."

"Yes," returned her mother resignedly, "and how full your head is of other matters. You were very nice to Phil on Christmas night, here. I was n't sure but that you would invite him yourself."

"Oh, why should I?"

"No reason, if you don't see any. Phil was very polite to you at your graduation. Those flowers were exquisite."

"Yes." The girl smiled. "They would have worried me, but that I know flowers are cheaper in June."

"I don't think that's a very nice thing to say," observed Mrs. Fabian.

"I meant it very nicely," returned Kathleen mildly.

## *The Peacemaker*

“Well, perhaps it is n’t so strange that you have not talked the island to him, since you have been engrossed in other things; but I have had all the trouble in the world to induce him to go; and if you had roused his enthusiasm a little it would have been easier.”

“Why have you urged him?” asked the girl.

Her mother regarded her for a pause, in exasperated silence. “Are you aware,” she returned at last, “that it is 87 in the shade this morning? Are you aware that these rooms, where the draught constantly changes the air, are slightly different from that studio, baking under a stable roof and hemmed in by high buildings?”

“Of course, of course!”

“Are you aware,” went on Mrs. Fabian sonorously, “that one who has always previously had a home might find a brief change from cheap restaurants invigorating in hot weather?”

“I did n’t know,” said Kathleen. “I thought perhaps he was too busy to notice. He” — she hesitated, but imperceptibly to Mrs. Fabian, — “he has not called here since I returned.”

“That’s just it,” flashed Phil’s defender. “He never spares himself. He thinks of nothing

### *The Inner Flame*

but work. Now, I have never forced any of my relatives on the Fabians," with heightened color, "but your father likes Phil. He was delighted to have me ask him. He has charged me to hold on to the boy until he can join us."

"I hope he can stay," put in Kathleen politely.

"If I can get him there," said Mrs. Fabian. "Here is this matter of the berths, as usual. The stateroom has been engaged for a month, but we have only Molly's berth outside."

Kathleen's eyes grew eager. "Well, that's all right," she said. "You won't mind taking Molly in the stateroom in my place, and let Mr. Sidney have her berth. I'll wait and come up with father."

"You not go with us? Kathleen, you're absurd." Color streamed again over Mrs. Fabian's face.

"No, no. That will be a fine plan, and relieve you of all embarrassment. Father will like to have me here, and I shall love to stay with him."

Mrs. Fabian gazed at the girl in silence. She admired Kathleen extravagantly. There was something in the girl's natural poise and ele-

## *The Peacemaker*

gance which the stepmother, with an innate, unacknowledged consciousness of inferiority, worshipped. She never forgot that Kathleen's mother had been a Van Ruysler. Now, as if it were not enough that Edgar scorned the island, and even if he should be granted leave of absence would not play the courteous host to Phil, now Kathleen was anxious to avoid him, and caught at an excuse to postpone her departure.

The girl grew uncomfortable under the fixed stare bent upon her, and when suddenly Mrs. Fabian dropped her coffee-spoon and burying her face in her hands burst into tears, Kathleen arose in dismay, the soft laces of her *négligée* floating in the breeze she made hastening around the table and taking the weeping one in her arms.

"I don't know what has happened," she said in bewilderment, "but I am sure it is all my fault. I was trying to help you, mother."

"You were not!" responded Mrs. Fabian, as angrily as the softening nature of salt water would permit. "You were trying to avoid that poor, lonely little fellow."

Kathleen bit her lip as memory presented the stalwart, self-confident artist before her.

## *The Inner Flame*

"You tell me to take my young cousin if I must, and get his visit over with before you come up there to enjoy yourself. You don't care how much you hurt his feelings."

"Why, mother, would n't he think it very natural that I should keep father company?"

"No, certainly not, when he knows that Edgar is here. He does n't know that Edgar is n't any use to anybody, unless it's Mrs. Larrabee. He'd just think the truth: that you don't want to be there at the same time he is."

"Now, mother, you're so mistaken. He would n't even miss me. When he gets the view from our porch he won't know whether I'm there or not."

"Very convenient excuse; but you need n't make any more of them. I understand you, Kathleen. Why should n't I, when I taught you to walk? I'm foolish to break down before you. I ought to have more pride; but it's the heat. I'm tired and nervous; and you come home from college with no interest except in what you've left behind you, and want to arrange things so that my guest at the island will have his visit spoiled —"

"Mother, he —"

"Nobody at the cottage but me, and nobody

## *The Peacemaker*

to help entertain him but Mrs. Wright and Eliza Brewster and —”

“Mother, he —”

“It’s so often that I ask any of my friends there! So often that I bore you and Edgar to look out for my guests! I must always be on hand for yours, to chaperone you and see that all goes smoothly for your plans. I suppose —”

“Mother, indeed —”

“If Phil had sunstroke, it would be all the same to you, just so he kept out of your way; and Christmas week when we went there to tea, how nice he was to us, and so amusing, getting everything in such perfect order that he apologized for not dusting the marshmallows. Oh, my head is just bursting!”

“There, mother dear, I know you will be ill, if you get so excited,” said Kathleen, patting the heaving white silken shoulder. “Of course, I’ll go to the island with you. I did n’t know you cared so much.”

Mrs. Fabian lifted her swollen eyes to behold her victory. “There’s one comfort, Kathleen,” she said, deep catches in her breath. “You never do things by halves. If you do go, you’ll never allow Phil to feel that he bores you.”

The girl smiled. “No, if I succeed in calling



### *The Inner Flame*

myself to his attention," she answered, "I promise he shan't suspect it."

"If he is sometimes absent-minded," said Mrs. Fabian defensively, "I'm sure I don't know any one who should have so much sympathy with him as you — the very queen of wool-gatherers."

Kathleen laughed and went back to her seat at the table. "I see that I must reform," she replied.

"I'm relieved, and I do thank you," said her mother; "but the question remains, how are we going to get Phil there?"

"That's easy. Send Molly with the other maids by the boat. I'll hook your gown."

"There," returned Mrs. Fabian; "you see, you might have suggested that in the first place. I understand you well enough, Kathleen."

"I thought it would be good fun to hob-nob with father. It's so long since I have."

"I'm going to persuade him to leave business early this year. It has worried him unusually this winter. He can if he only thinks so. I reminded him this morning that if he died, the business would have to get on without him. He agreed, but said in that case the loss would

## *The Peacemaker*

be wholly covered by insurance. Rather grim sort of humor, that. I told him I could n't see anything funny in such talk."

"Poor father," commented Kathleen. "Everybody is tired this time of year. There should be some arrangement of relays in running a business. The winter workers should be turned out to grass in May."

She looked at her father that evening with observant eyes, as together they moved into his den after dinner. It had been closed from the sun all day and he sank into a big leather armchair by a breeze-blown window, following his daughter's white-clad figure with appreciative eyes.

"I'm glad you're through college, Kath," he said.

"So I can light your cigar the rest of my life?" she asked, seating herself on his knee and applying the lighted match.

"Partly that," he answered, drawing in the flame, "and partly for your mother's sake. She needs more companionship than I can give her. She has a gay nature; she likes going out. I hope you are n't too much like me."

"I hope I'm exactly like you," the girl returned devoutly; and leaning forward, she drew

## *The Inner Flame*

in a mouthful of the fragrant cigar smoke and exhaled it through her nostrils. The movement was quick and graceful, and she looked mischievously pretty.

"Don't do that, you monkey," said her father quickly.

"Why not?"

"I don't like it."

"I'm frightfully unfashionable, because I smoke so little," she returned.

"It's a vicious habit — for women," declared Mr. Fabian.

"But I'm a suffragist; besides, men tolerate it in women now — they like them to do it."

"Not the women they love," said Mr. Fabian quickly.

"Oh!" responded Kathleen.

"When I saw you smoking a cigarette with Edgar a little while ago," he went on, "I spoke to you about it. Don't you remember? I told you how unbecoming I thought it. I hoped you would heed me."

Kathleen met his serious gaze.

"That was n't a little while ago," she said.

"Certainly it was. This winter."

"It could n't have been later than Novem-

## *The Peacemaker*

ber," she went on slowly, "for I have n't touched a cigarette since then."

"Good girl." Mr. Fabian patted her shoulder. "It disgusted me to see you. You'll never do it again?"

"No." She shook her head, and carefully ran her finger through a ring of smoke as it passed her.

"I wish I could get Edgar to say the same," remarked Mr. Fabian.

"You don't set him a good example," she returned.

"You never saw me with a cigarette. Edgar has to abstain from them in the office, but I think he sits up all night to make up for it. I have an idea they contribute to his general uselessness."

Kathleen smoothed the care-worn lines in the speaker's brow with her gentle fingers. He loved their touch.

"I think Edgar is n't smoking much these days," she said.

"Indeed." The response was indifferent. "Why should that be? Does Mrs. Larrabee want them all?"

"It's on account of his voice," said Kathleen. The tired man of affairs removed his cigar to

## *The Inner Flame*

laugh while his daughter arranged his hair around his temples. "Edgar denying himself!" he ejaculated quietly.

"Yes, father, he's waking up to it," said the girl, with a little serious nod; "and that's one thing Mrs. Larrabee has really done for him — made him believe that his voice is worth working for."

"It's the only thing she can find to flatter him about. That's all that amounts to," said Mr. Fabian, resuming his cigar. "So long as she can make any use of him she will keep him dangling about, and flattery is the best bait."

"But his voice is a real gift," insisted Kathleen, with deliberate emphasis. "Don't you think so?"

"I never heard him sing that I know of — certainly not for years."

"It is beautiful — the heart-reaching kind. If he had n't been a rich man's son it would have been given to the world in some shape."

"A rich man's son." Mr. Fabian repeated the words quietly, and took his daughter's arm in a strong grasp. "Kathleen, this has been an awful winter. I don't know what the next year will bring forth. Say nothing to your mother, but there are threatening clouds all about me."

## *The Peacemaker*

"Father!" The girl pressed her cheek to his, and there was a moment of silence; then she spoke again gently. "I have often wished I might have been your son."

The hand that had gripped her arm, stole around her and drew her close.

After a moment, she sat up again and faced him. "I came in here to-night on purpose to speak to you about Edgar," she went on. "He wanted me to intercede for him in a matter."

"A matter of debts, I suppose," said Mr. Fabian, his manner imperturbable again, and his tone bitter.

"Yes, but —"

"I'm through," interrupted the man. "He has had plenty of warning. I would not tell you, Kathleen, the number of foolish, and sometimes disgraceful, affairs I have settled for him."

"I don't doubt it, dear, but let me tell you about this," said the girl seriously. "Edgar has no judgment or foresight. He persists in claiming that he was born with a golden spoon in his mouth and that whatever he can scoop up with it is his right. He is your only son and you owe him unlimited liberty."

"The lessons I have given him would be

## *The Inner Flame*

sufficient if he had any brains," said the father sternly.

"Yes; but just a minute more. This debt will astonish you. It is to Mazzini, the famous voice teacher. He has been studying with him since January."

"Just like his vanity! Let him send the bill to Mrs. Larrabee. It is her doing."

"Yes, it was her doing in the first place, but I suspect from what Edgar says that she is tired of him. He has n't seen her often of late, and she sails for Europe anyway next week; and Edgar is so interested in his music that now it comes first. His teacher is so enthusiastic!"

"Of course he is!" observed Mr. Fabian cynically. "They're always enthusiastic over the voices of pupils whose pocketbooks will stand the strain."

"Edgar sang for me last night while you and mother were out. Father, it was a beautiful performance. It is the real thing. Of course, he was wrong — crazy, to go into such expense without asking you, for the lessons are frightfully dear; but if the boy were to amount to something in an artistic line, would n't it be worth the investment? You are discouraged by his lack of interest in business."

## *The Peacemaker*

Mr. Fabian's chin sank dejectedly as he flicked the ash from his cigar into the receiver on the stand beside his chair.

"Discouraged by his inability," he said slowly; "discouraged by his lack of principle, by his vanity and conceit. I will give him board and lodging as long as he wishes to live with me; but —"

"Then, dear," interrupted Kathleen, her voice thrilling with the sympathy she felt, "try this one thing more. If the expense does n't appall you —"

Mr. Fabian shook his head impatiently. "That would be nothing — as yet."

"Edgar can't study through the summer. His teacher is going to Italy. He would like to go with him —" the girl paused doubtfully.

Her father laughed. "I dare say. Edgar's European travel, however, is over until he is engaged to sing before the crowned heads."

"Yes, I supposed so," agreed the girl; "but he means to work faithfully all summer."

"Work faithfully! Edgar!" repeated Mr. Fabian.

"Supposing he should, father. Supposing he has found his niche in life and will do something worth while."



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

"I know," she said, "that you know you  
ought to have known better that it was  
unreasonable to force him to pay this big bill for  
your lessons."

Julian choked and swallowed, meeting the  
eyes that were lifting to him from the depths  
of the leather armchair. Convicted of eaves-  
dropping and reading the cold appraisal in

## *The Peacemaker*

his father's gaze, he had not gathered himself to utter a word when Mr. Fabian spoke.

"You have not forced me," he said slowly. "I can refuse. You are of age. You can be sued and imprisoned quite independently of me."

Edgar's heart beat fast and he set the even teeth.

"You have counted once more on my unwillingness to have this occur; but that unwillingness has been weakening for years."

Still Edgar did not speak. Kathleen, standing by her father's chair, her hands clasped tightly, dared not. She noted that Edgar's gaze did not fall. He met his father's eyes in crimson silence.

"You know," continued Mr. Fabian distinctly, "whether I have exhausted persuasion and argument with you. You know my futile attempts to rouse your ambition to be my coadjutor, my successor. What you do not know, because you are incapable of understanding, is the agony of the slow death of my hope in my only son: the successive stages of thought which have finally reduced me to closing the account, and charging him up to profit and loss."

### *The Inner Flame*

“Wonderful if true,” remarked Mr. Fabian.

“But it won’t help to disbelieve in him. I know he began all wrong forcing you to pay this money —”

Kathleen arose suddenly, and, moving across the room, opened the heavy door of the den. “Come in, Edgar,” she called. The invitation was unnecessary; for the youth, in his eagerness to hear what fate was being meted out to him within the closed apartment, had been leaning so hard against the door that when all at once it fell away from him, he staggered into the room with the most undignified celerity.

Stirred as Kathleen was, she had to bite her lip before she could speak; but when her brother had gained his perpendicular and faced them with a somewhat frightened and very crimson countenance, she broke the silence.

“Tell father,” she said, “that you know you began this new venture wrong: that it was shameful to force him to pay this big bill for your lessons.”

Edgar choked and swallowed, meeting the eyes that were lifting to him from the depths of the leathern armchair. Convicted of eaves-dropping and reading the cold appraisal in

## *The Peacemaker*

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## *The Inner Flame*

Kathleen watched her brother under the lash with the same pitiful misery she felt for his punishments when they were children.

"But you're going to try him in this new field, father," she said beseechingly.

There was a space of silence, then Mr. Fabian spoke: —

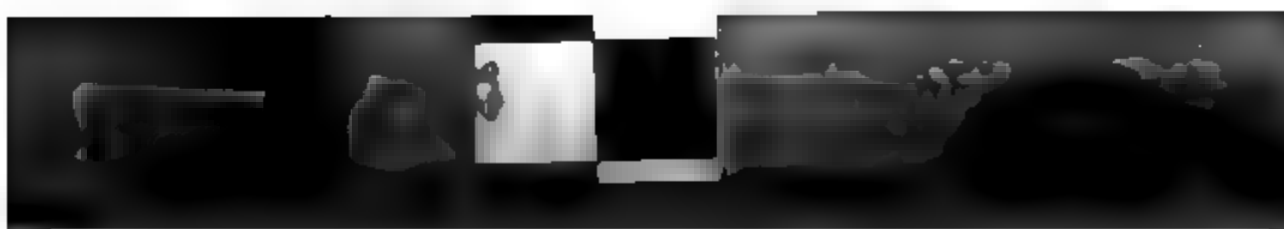
"I am going to trust your sister's judgment in this matter, Edgar. She believes you are in earnest. I am going to pay these tuition bills, and the coming months will show whether this is another passing toy, or a matter in which you can make good. To find you are good for anything, my boy," added the father, after another painful pause, "will be an amazing and welcome discovery."

Something clicked in Edgar's throat. He evidently wished to speak, but his tongue seemed glued to the roof of his mouth. At last he found voice.

"I don't blame you," he said jerkily, "but — I'll show you!"

Mr. Fabian nodded his head slightly. "That's what I want," he said quietly; "I need to be shown."

Without another word, Edgar turned on his heel and left the room.



### ***The Peacemaker***

Kathleen sank on her knees and buried her face on her father's breast.

"He did n't thank you," she said, half weeping, "but he felt it. I know he felt it. Oh, father, how I hope for your sake —"

She could not speak further, and Mr. Fabian patted her shoulder, his eyes gazing out the darkening window.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MRS. FABIAN'S SCHEME

MRS. FABIAN chanced to meet Edgar as he was leaving the house immediately after this interview. She had heard the closing of the library door, and the expression of her son's excited face, as he strode by her, was such that she let him go in silence.

She knew Kathleen was with her father, and she was only too willing to use the girl as a buffer when Edgar was the subject of conversation.

She moved about restlessly until she heard Kathleen leave the den and close the door softly behind her. Then she waylaid her daughter at the foot of the staircase. By the soft light of the electric lantern, she could see that the girl's eyes were red.

"Come right up to my room," she whispered, excitedly, as if the very walls had ears. "I just met Edgar."

They ascended in silence and Mrs. Fabian led the way into her boudoir, started an electric fan, and turned on the light.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

"Has his father cut him off?" she asked, facing Kathleen, her gaze wide with dread.

"No, oh, no." The girl sank into a chair. "It was awful, but I hope it is the beginning of better things. Did you know that Edgar had begun to work with his voice?"

"No! I've noticed that he has been making the most awful noises in his room lately."

"Well, the talk grew out of that and the new debts he has contracted."

"Edgar can't turn around without getting into debt!" ejaculated his mother desperately.

Kathleen told her then what had occurred and she listened attentively.

"Do you suppose it will amount to anything?" she asked at last.

Kathleen shook her head vaguely. "I don't know enough about the opportunities," she replied, "and I know too much about Edgar. If he is only going to use an accomplishment to stand in a more brilliant limelight with those whose admiration he wants —" she shook her head again.

Mrs. Fabian looked thoughtful. "I never saw such a look in his face as he had just now."

"Father's words stung him, I know. He



## *The Inner Flame*

even said, 'I don't blame you.' Perhaps he will begin now to be a man."

"I thought he might be going forever. I did n't dare to speak to him."

Kathleen gave a disclaiming exclamation. "He could n't do that. He is more helpless than a little new-fledged chicken."

"I don't know," returned Mrs. Fabian sapiently. "Take a weak, good-looking fellow like Edgar, with a lovely voice, and if he became reckless there are plenty of sporty cafés in this town where they would pay him as an attraction. He knows that."

"Mother!" exclaimed Kathleen, aghast.

"Why, certainly!" averred Mrs. Fabian dismally elated at the dismay she had evoked. "There are a few things I know more about than you do, Kathleen. Imagine a handsome young fellow in correct evening clothes, when the patrons are hilarious at midnight, rising in his place, and, wineglass in hand, suddenly singing a love-song or ragtime. Do you think he would get a few encores? Do you think he could get paid to come again?" Mrs. Fabian had heard a description of lurid New Year's Eve revels and she built a shrewd surmise upon it.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

Kathleen was so worked upon by the picture that she rose restlessly, and moving to the window gazed into the summer gloom as if searching for a glimpse of her brother's well-carried, polished blond head.

Mrs. Fabian bridled with dignified importance as she watched her; but her complacency was short-lived.

Kathleen suddenly faced about. "Then how," she asked, "can you wish me to leave for the island at such a time?"

"Oh, are you going back to that again!"

"With father and Edgar in this sensitive state toward each other — to leave them to meet alone in this great house, with no one to soften the embarrassment. Would it be any wonder if Edgar fled to just such scenes as you describe? And would n't it be decidedly our fault?"

Mrs. Fabian leaned forward in her armchair.

"You could n't do any permanent good," she said earnestly. "Edgar must really act alone, whether you are here or not. He has n't done any of his practising here anyway, except those uncanny noises in his room."

"No. There is some piano house where he has been able to use a room at noon; but his teacher sails this week and he cannot get the

## *The Inner Flame*

room any more. He would naturally do a lot of work at home after you were gone, if he felt at ease; and if I were here, it would help a great deal."

Mrs. Fabian felt baffled. The truth of Kathleen's proposition was unanswerable; and to urge any claim above Edgar's good at this crucial time would be, she knew, inexcusable in his sister's eyes.

The girl, burdened with the double responsibility of her father's confidence, and Edgar's future, turned again to the window and gazed out into the darkness, while Mrs. Fabian, leaning back in the breeze from the electric fan, put on her thinking-cap. It seemed hard that her wayward boy, if he had started on a worthy road, should manage at his very first step to get in her way.

Her will was strong and shrewd. When later that night she was alone with her husband, she opened the subject.

"Kathleen tells me Edgar has taken up serious work with his voice."

"Kathleen is optimistic," was the laconic reply.

"I think, Henry, we ought to meet him halfway in any honourable undertaking."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

Mr. Fabian made an inarticulate exclamation. He was thinking of the bill Kathleen had placed in his hands before she left him to-night.

"I can't think," proceeded Mrs. Fabian, "that anything but a high sense of duty would induce anybody to make the blood-curdling noises that I've heard lately from Edgar's room."

A short silence; then Mrs. Fabian spoke again. "It seems he cannot go any longer to the place where he has done his practising. I'm afraid if he should work evenings here, it might annoy you, Henry."

"I dare say it might," agreed the weary man, with an involuntary sigh.

"I was thinking that if he is not very busy at the office —"

"Very busy!" The father threw back his head.

"You might give him a longer vacation" —

"Edgar's whole life is a vacation," said Mr. Fabian.

"And let him go with us to the island. If he is really going to make music his lifework he could practise regularly there and be away from temptations, and —"

Mr. Fabian slowly faced his wife with such

## *The Inner Flame*

attention that she paused hopefully, then went on:—

“You know Philip Sidney is going with me, and his companionship would be so good for Edgar.”

“It’s a bright thought, my dear,” said Mr. Fabian. “The office will be able to struggle along without Edgar, and then we can close the house and I can live at the club.”

“Not too long,” said his wife, so pleased at her sudden success that she put her arms around his neck and kissed him. “Not too long, Henry. You must take a long vacation this year.”

He returned her caress. “One day at a time,” he said briefly.

Mrs. Fabian sought her pillow, well-pleased; and contrary to her habit, she was up betimes next morning, and hastened to her son’s room before he came down to breakfast.

“Can I come in?” she asked, knocking.

Edgar was in his shirt-sleeves adjusting his tie; and when he opened the door and saw his mother, he gave an exclamation.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Too hot to sleep?”

A cloudless sun was promising another day with a soaring thermometer.

Mrs. Fabian noted the hard questioning in



### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

her boy's eyes. She knew he considered her his father's aid in denying him the right to spend as a millionaire's son should — knew that his attitude toward her had long been defensive; and that her unusual visit to his room roused only his suspicion of something disagreeable.

"Do you mind if I come in, dear?" she asked, her soft silks trailing noiselessly as she moved across the room. "I am so interested in what I hear about your music."

Edgar was silent, continuing to busy himself with his tie. He knew his stepmother too well to believe that she had risen with the lark to felicitate him on his last venture. He took up the ivory military brushes she had given him and began to use them vigorously. He was still smarting from the scene of the night before and he braced himself for a homily on the subject of his music bill.

"I've never believed in thwarting a child's bent," said Mrs. Fabian, flicking the ashes from a chair to make it fit to sit upon. "I said to Philip Sidney's mother, 'let him paint.' I said to your father last night when I heard all this, 'let Edgar sing.'"

Mrs. Fabian paused to allow her breadth of view to sink in. Edgar glanced around at her

## *The Inner Flame*

sulkily, from his mirror, and then looked back again.

"Now, you have no taste for commercial life, dear, why waste more time in it at present until you see what the artistic line holds for you?"

Edgar glanced back at the speaker again quickly. What was the "nigger in the fence"? Her face looked innocently out at him from a becoming boudoir cap.

"And I suggested to your father that he let your vacation start earlier and that you come with us to the island next Wednesday. You are going to work for a time anyway without your teacher, and this hot atmosphere must be so relaxing to the throat. There it is pure and bracing and you can lay out your course of study and be undisturbed."

Edgar regarded the speaker with some interest now, but still questioning.

"Father thinks, then, we could close the house and he would live at the club."

Edgar tossed his head, raised his eyebrows, and proceeded to put on his coat.

"You want to close the house. That's it," he said.

"Don't you think it would be a good plan?" asked Mrs. Fabian ingratiatingly.

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

All Edgar's cynicism was not proof against allowing some satisfaction to appear in the prospect of leaving the office routine and pursuing the line of work which had genuinely captured his interest.

"Yes, I don't mind," he answered. "Kath going with you?"

"Yes, and Philip Sidney, — just for a short visit."

Edgar shrugged his shoulders.

"You can imagine the heat of that stable room," suggested Mrs. Fabian.

"Tophet, I suppose," agreed Edgar. "All right. I'll go." The even teeth had been set many times since last evening in the prospect of a *tête-à-tête* existence with his father.

"I wish we might go on all together, but, of course, not knowing, I did n't engage a berth for you."

"I'll go on the day train," responded Edgar; adding with his customary grace, "I never was keen for travelling in caravans anyway."

Mrs. Fabian was not critical of his rudeness. She was too pleased at having gained her end, and soon floated away to Kathleen's room, her next strategic point.



## *The Inner Flame*

She found her daughter propped up in bed with coffee and toast on a table before her.

"Good morning, mother, you put me to shame," said the girl. "Didn't you sleep either? This is early for you."

"Poor child," said Mrs. Fabian, seating herself on the foot of the bed and observing the rings around the other's eyes. "Yes, I slept pretty well, but not until after your father and I had had a long talk."

Kathleen scrutinized her mother's complacent countenance and made up her mind that the talk could not have concerned business.

"I told him how sure I felt that Edgar was in earnest now, and we both concluded it was time wasted to try any longer to fit a square peg into a round hole, so your father is going to let the boy go to the island at once with us and work at his voice there, away from temptations."

"Oh, how fine!" breathed Kathleen. "Then," she added aloud, "he will entertain Mr. Sidney in my place, and I can stay with father."

"That's an absurd idea and you know it. Philip and Edgar would get along like two tigers. You can see that I need you more than ever to reconcile them."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

Kathleen's face did not look encouraging. She longed to tell her mother of her father's straits, but her lips were sealed.

"Besides," added Mrs. Fabian, with the conscious power of one who plays the last trump, "one reason your father wishes to dispense with Edgar is that he wants to close the house and live at the club."

Kathleen's face fell and her eyes looked away.

"You see he'll come to us all the sooner, dear," said her mother. "Men talk about enjoying living at the club, but when they are happy family men they tire of it very soon."

The girl smiled faintly. "We have been something of a 'happy family' lately," she said; "but if Edgar really turns over a new leaf —"

"Oh, he has!" declared Mrs. Fabian. "I'm glad to remember that the outdoors is large at Brewster's. I suspect he will nearly drive us crazy, but one must exercise some self-sacrifice in this world." She rose. "Take another nap if you can, Kathleen. I'm thankful the island is so near for you. You're completely tired out."

But Kathleen did not take another nap. She dressed very soon, and, pleading a desire for fresh air, left the house. She did not ask for the machine lest her mother should offer to accom-

## *The Inner Flame*

pany her, but descended in all her dainty whiteness into the subway and started for Wall Street. Arrived at the labyrinth of offices where daily Mr. Fabian struggled and Edgar endured, she dreaded meeting her brother, but she saw nothing of him, and waited in an ante-room, looking about her with a swelling heart. How little part she and her mother had ever had in the heavy responsibilities of her father's life. She doubted if her mother came here twice a year, and when she did it was simply to obtain money.

She had not long to wait, for Mr. Fabian himself opened the door of his private office, and the clerk passing out saw him stoop and kiss the girl in the large hat strewn with lilacs.

"What brings you, my dear?" he asked, his brows knitting anxiously. She smiled and clung to his hand as they moved inside. "You're pale, Kathleen. Off to the island with you, child. Off to the island."

"That's just what I came about," she answered, taking the chair he set for her, and the electric fan whirring above her head carried the scent of orris to her father. "I would so much rather stay with you. I came to urge you to let me."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

He regarded her with eyes full of affection and gave a short laugh.

"I frightened you last night," he said. "Perhaps I did wrong."

"No, no, you did n't. Mother told me the plan to let Edgar go. That is right. Edgar can't be a comfort to you; but I can, father. Don't shut up the house. Let me stay with you till you are ready to go."

Mr. Fabian nodded, his eyes fixed upon the sensitive face with its beseeching eyes.

"You're a good girl, Kathleen. You are a comfort to me, whether we're together or not; and just now it will be an advantage to me to live close to my associates at the club. Go without anxiety, child. I promise to keep you advised of everything important."

The troubled eyes did not leave his face.

"Don't exaggerate what I said last night. I am not going to make any spectacular failure, but I have my own ideas of equity and I'm not going to wriggle out on a technicality. My course may lose me friends as well as money; but I've got to live with myself, and there are some memories I don't propose to entertain. Your mother has always been moderate in her demands, she has never shared the insane ambi-

## *The Inner Flame*

tions of some of her acquaintances; but her toys are very dear to her and I hate to curtail them. It looks as if I might have to."

"It might be the making of Edgar," said Kathleen.

Her father regarded her in silent admiration. It was evident that her own part in the loss had not occurred to her.

"Your mother's unselfishness in keeping the island summer home, because I like its simplicity, makes this season's problem easy. By autumn I shall know the worst."

"How I would like to stay with you right along until everything is settled," said Kathleen fervently. "I want to be sure that you know how happy I should be in it. I keep so busy with my slides and microscope, and then — there's something else I do." Kathleen colored consciously. "I meant not to tell any one yet, but, — I write a little!"

"Stories, you mean?"

The girl nodded. "It is nothing, it may never amount to anything; but the microscope suggested it to me. There is such a great world that we never enter or think about. So you can see how happy I should be in our big, cool house, and not a bit lonely, — if you'll only have me."

### *Mrs. Fabian's Scheme*

"I believe you, Kathleen, but it would n't work, dear. I could be at home so little, and I'd like to cut off the expense of the house."

"Oh, oh! Is it so bad as that?"

"No, not nearly so bad; but in time of peace, prepare for war."

"Then mother had better not take her usual weeks at a resort."

Mr. Fabian raised his eyebrows. "How else is the dear lady to exhibit her summer toilets? The fish at the island are so unappreciative."

"Don't keep things from mother," pleaded Kathleen.

"I promise not to when there is anything to tell. I was weak enough to think out loud with you. Now, run along, my child."

"Oh, father, always be weak enough to think out loud with me. Will you?" He had risen and she did so reluctantly.

He crushed her trim whiteness in his arms, and kissed her. "Don't make me sorry, then. Don't cross any bridge until you come to it. Promise."

She smiled up at him bravely. "I promise," she said, and left the office with a wistful backward look at him standing there, his eyes following her.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CASCO BAY

PAT's benevolent heart swelled with satisfaction when, a few evenings later, Philip ran down the stable stairs, his packed suitcase in hand.

"Wish you were going along," said the artist, meeting the Irishman's approving gaze.

"I will as soon as ye need a valet," was the reply. "Ye think I can't put on style!" Pat winked and shook his head knowingly. "Ye'd burst wid pride if ye saw me fixed up and waitin' on ye."

"I have n't a doubt of it. Well, so long. It will be only a few nights before I shall be back, sizzling with you again." And Phil gave the man a smiling nod and went out of the door, almost running into the arms of Mrs. Fabian, who, in the trimmest of cool grey travelling gowns, was looking askance at a spring and mattress outside the barn door.

Pat aghast, hastened to button the open throat of his shirt. "The Queen o' Sheby," he muttered.

"Why, did I keep you waiting, Aunt Isabel?"

## *Casco Bay*

asked Phil, with contrition. "I was planning to be out in front in plenty of time."

"Yes, it is early, but I wanted to speak to your man a minute."

Pat bowed in the direction of the voluminous grey chiffon veil. "You may go out and join Kathleen," Mrs. Fabian added.

"Dear me, nothing private, I hope," said Phil, vastly amused by the conflicting emotions on the Irishman's face.

"Have you seen to putting your evening clothes away?" asked Mrs. Fabian.

"Why — why, they're hanging up there in the closet."

"Just what I expected. Run along, and I'll tell this good man what to do."

Phil gave Pat one humorous glance and obeyed, passing out toward the street where he soon saw Kathleen in the waiting car, her hat tied down by a roseate veil.

Mrs. Fabian at once accosted Pat. "Could you pack up Mr. Sidney's belongings and send them after him, if we ask you?"

"I could, mum, but 't is only a week he'll be away."

"He would n't want his evening clothes. Do you know what a moth-bag is?"



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"I do not, thin."

"Well, go to the store and ask, please. Brush Mr. Sidney's evening clothes thoroughly and put them in the bag, seal it up tight, and hang it in the closet. The careless boy. That's what comes of always having had a mother."

"Lot's o' folks is jist that careless," remarked Pat. He was beginning to feel that even a queen, if she invaded his own vine and fig tree, might be a little less peremptory.

"You may send everything else, except of course his winter overcoat. By the way, you may get another moth-bag for that, and treat it in the same manner."

"He'll not be stayin', mum. He's all for work."

"Has he been sleeping out here on these hot stones?" demanded Mrs. Fabian, with dilating nostrils, looking at the mattress.

"No, mum, he usually took the bed," responded the Irishman.

"Well, you've carried his upstairs, I see."

"I'll have to break it to ye that he did it himself," said the man.

Mrs. Fabian ignored his manner. Her thought was filled with Philip's situation.

"Well, here," she said, with a preoccupied

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air, and, taking a bill from the fine-mesh purse which hung from her wrist, she held it out to the Irishman. "Take this and do what I've asked you. You need n't prepay the trunk if you send it. Keep the change, and I hope the heat here won't grow any worse. Good-bye." And Mrs. Fabian turned on her heel and the grey chiffon floated away up the alley.

Pat looked at the five-dollar bill he held and tossed his head. "Who is that bye," he muttered, "and will he iver live in the stable ag'in?"

Suddenly, bethinking himself that he might see the grand departure of his lodger, he hurried out to the street, and was in time to see Phil's straw hat loom amid a confusion of grey and rosy streaming veils.

"Sure, 't is only the rich enjoys this life," he thought good-naturedly, and unbuttoning his neckband again, he returned to his palm-leaf fan.

As the motor flew breezily through the hot city streets, Philip gave himself up to the pleasure of his outing. Mrs. Fabian regarded him with supreme satisfaction, and Kathleen, though a little heartsore from parting with her father, dared not indulge in a pensive moment, knowing that her mother would pounce upon it alertly and later reproach her.

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They passed the evening in the stateroom of the flying train, and Mrs. Fabian narrated with much dignity the tale of Edgar's retirement from commercial life in favor of the arts. Philip pricked up his ears when he learned that the heir of the house was expected at the island at once.

Kathleen was not obliged to talk much, and at last they all ceased fanning themselves and shouting remarks against the clatter of the open windows, and retired.

After breakfast the following morning, as they entered a carriage to cross Portland, Kathleen nodded at Philip.

"Say good-bye to heat," she remarked.

"Hard to believe," returned the Westerner, who had tried to refrain from talking of his native mountains. His thoughts often travelled back even to the stable studio where certain work begun stood awaiting his return; but soon after they entered the boat for the island, he began to see Kathleen's words fulfilled. The ladies wrapped themselves in heavy coats and Mrs. Fabian begged Phil to put on his sweater; but he held his hat in his hand and declared his desire to be chilled to the bone.

As they pulled out past the near islands into

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wide spaces of sea, interest slowly grew in Phil's eyes. His comments grew less frequent, and finally stopped. The islands rose tree-crowned from the water, casting deep green reflections at their feet. Phil took a notebook from his pocket, and occasionally asking the name of an island, he wrote it in the book. Kathleen, understanding his intent, and knowing that he would not fulfil it because of greater satisfaction further on, smiled at her mother.

"What did I tell you?" she asked.

"Well, what did you?"

"That he would n't know whether I was here or not."

"Sh—!"

"He can't hear me any more than if he were anæsthetized."

"Hush, Kathleen."

"I'll prove it." She raised her voice. "Mr. Sidney!"

Phil not only did not reply, but after a moment more he moved away to another and more unobstructed spot.

Kathleen gave a low laugh and Mrs. Fabian looked pleased.

"He is enjoying it, is n't he?" she returned.  
"This day is a wonderful bit of good fortune.

## *The Inner Flame*

First impressions are so important. What made you expect him to behave like this?"

"I think I must have a groping, artistic sense myself. At any rate, I knew what Casco Bay must do to an artist when he comes upon it all unprepared."

Mrs. Fabian sighed. "Well, I'm glad our coming here does somebody some good. Are you going on forever calling that boy 'Mr.'? Of course, he can't be informal with you unless you will be so with him."

"Mother dear, I tell you it does n't matter," laughed the girl. "He has gone into a trance and he probably won't come out of it till the first fog. By that time, perhaps I shall feel entirely informal."

Captain James stood on the pier when the boat approached Brewster's Island. Kathleen caught sight of him and waved her handkerchief.

"Mother, it's time to go and make passes over Philip," she said. "He'll have to wake up."

Mrs. Fabian went to the guest and touched him on the arm. For an hour and a half he had not addressed them.

He started.

## *Casco Bay*

"We're there, Phil," she said.

He followed her, and glanced at Kathleen with a sensation of guilt. He seized the bags with an alacrity intended to offset his preoccupation.

"It's a wonderful bay," he said.

Kathleen was not regarding him. She was leaning over the rail, waving again toward a tall lean man on the wharf, who smiled, well-pleased, and jerked his head in her direction.

Soon many passengers were streaming up the gangplank, and in a minute Kathleen was greeting the tall lean man with a gayety Phil had never before seen in her demeanor.

Mrs. Fabian next shook hands with him, and introduced Phil, who, in the confusion and limitations of the commonplace wharf, had quite regained his normal alertness.

"You gave us a very nice day, Cap'n James," said Mrs. Fabian graciously. "Where's the carriage?"

"Waitin'. Can't take you all, I'm afraid. Mrs. Frick from down-along engaged me ahead."

"Ahead of us?" inquired Mrs. Fabian superbly.

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"Got one seat," said Captain James. He was accustomed to Mrs. Fabian's autocracy.

"That's all we want," said Kathleen. "Mr. Sidney and I will walk up."

So Mrs. Fabian and the bags were stowed in the carriage and the young people were started on their walk before Tom had turned heavily into the road.

"What air!" exclaimed Phil, as they struck into the deep grass.

"One can live on it," agreed the girl.

"Don't expect me to; I feel wonderful pangs already. Gramercy Park had nearly cured me of eating."

He smiled down at his companion in the rose-ate veil tied under her chin, and she glanced up at the city pallor of his face. "I should think it might," she agreed. "Wait a week. We shall both look like tomatoes and feel like disembodied spirits."

"I'm afraid I behaved like the latter, coming down the bay; but really I forgot everything. I want to study the boat-tables and go back to some of those wonderful shores."

Kathleen smiled demurely. "This does n't cut much of a figure by contrast, does it?" she said.

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They were crossing diagonally through a green field which led gently up to the island road.

"It's beautifully fresh here," replied Phil politely, looking about the bare treeless expanse rolling up to a bluff against illimitable sky.

A village store upon the road, a little school-house and a cottage or two, were all that was to be seen.

Above, on Mrs. Wright's doorstep, Eliza Brewster was standing, opera glass in hand, watching the tall figure and the rosy veil coming up through the field. She had restrained herself from running down to the road, for she dreaded Mrs. Fabian, and Phil for the moment had forgotten that Eliza might be in the neighborhood. His eyes brightened as they reached the road. He had been privately wondering why the Fabians had chosen this unpromising island as their abiding place. Now he caught sight of the spreading cove, its brilliant banks dark with evergreen trees, while in sheltered spots maples and birches stood amid a riot of shrubs inviting the birds.

"That's a fine cove," he said, his eyes fixed on the far reaches of the sea.



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"So the yachtsmen think," returned Kathleen.

"Let's look at it a minute," said Phil.

The girl paused obediently and a smile touched the corners of her lips. Phil's impersonality with regard to herself was novel; for Kathleen had the intangible quality called charm to such a degree that nothing masculine had ever before been able to approach so near to her without striving to win her favor.

From that first Sunday in the stable studio she had perceived that if she were going to see more of this new factor in the family circle she must do the striving if she were to become a factor to him. A dread that she might desire to do this had beset her ever since, and warned her away from him with a sense of self-preservation.

He stood forgetful of her now, and narrowed his eyes to the picture.

"Well, have you looked enough?" she asked. "How are the pangs?"

"Yes, yes," he replied hurriedly. "I can come back."

"Certainly, we promise not to lock you up," she answered, half-laughing. "We'll get better views of it, too, as we go on," she added, and

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turned at a right angle into a green ribbon road leading up a second incline.

Phil looked about vaguely, and followed her. He noticed on the crest above them a cottage of boulders and shingles.

"Yours?" he asked.

"Home, sweet home," she answered.

Captain James passed them now with his load, and by the time they reached the cottage, Mrs. Fabian was on the steps to welcome them; but Philip was absorbed in the surprise which the summit of that hill gave the newcomer. Before him, but a few rods away, spread the Atlantic, foaming at the foot of the bluff. Distant islands came near in the crystal air, their outline defined by rocks, which in the distance seemed ribbons of sandy beach. The superb breadth of view, ending either in the horizon or in the irregular skyline of the mainland, took the breath of the unfamiliar.

Mrs. Fabian straightened with pleasure in the spellbound look of her guest as, his hat dropped upon the grass, he gazed in silence. It was her island and her view. She started to speak, but Kathleen touched her finger to her lips with a suggestive smile; so the lady sank instead into a hammock chair. Her maid Molly

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came out of the house, greeted the ladies and carried in their bags, saying that dinner would be served whenever they were ready.

Philip, from his stand below on the grass, turned and looked up at them, his eyes dark with the blue of the sea.

"I understand now," he said, "why you have n't talked about it."

"Come in and have something to eat," suggested his exultant hostess. "We have noon dinner. Kathleen simply refuses to shorten the day with a long evening meal."

Philip gave the girl a brilliant smile of appreciation.

"After dinner," went on Mrs. Fabian, "Kathleen will take you to walk to some of our pretty places."

"No, indeed," said the girl hastily. "I understand just how Mr. Sidney will love to explore for himself. I would n't spoil his surprises."

Philip said nothing to the contrary. His thoughts were absorbed taking mental stock of the materials he had brought, and he followed mechanically into the charming cottage whose every window framed a water scene, waves creaming upon the rocks which stretched

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granite fingers unceasingly to grasp them, while unceasingly they slipped away.

As soon as Phil reached his room he threw open his suitcase with feverish haste and examined all the sketching paraphernalia he had packed so hastily.

The music box which called to meals played all its tunes, but the guest did not appear. At last Mrs. Fabian sent Molly to knock on his door.

"What a wonderful day," she said to Kathleen when they were alone, "and in June one is so likely to strike fog and rain. Now let it come. He has seen what Brewster's Island really is — or he will see when you have taken him about this afternoon. The only drawback to the whole trip so far has been your refusal to do that. How could you be so abrupt, my dear?"

"Mother, don't try to manage an artist," replied the girl emphatically. "He will want only to be let alone. Can't you see it? And so do I." Kathleen looked remarkably defiant. "I want to be let alone. This is my vacation, too, remember. I have worked as hard as he has."

Mrs. Fabian met her child's determined regard with surprise. Kathleen did look pale and

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thin, now that she had time to observe it. The heat of the train last night had not been conducive to sleep.

"Very well, dear," she acquiesced with meekness. "Perhaps you ought to lie down this afternoon. I'm sure I shall. I'd like the very waves to be still."

As she spoke the last word, Philip appeared and they sat down at table. The combination of the air and the delicious fresh sea-food to one long unaccustomed to home fare made the guest suspend all artistic calculations and do such justice to the dinner that Mrs. Fabian sighed.

"It is such a satisfaction to have a man's appetite at the table," she said, when Phil made laughing apology and referred to the city restaurants. "To-morrow we shall have two men."

"To be sure," thought Phil. These were Edgar's mother and sister and home. Somehow he could not fit the *blasé* society man into this Arcadia. He must make the most of to-day.

As his hunger wore away he looked more and more from the windows. The dining-room might have been on a ship for the freedom of its vast sea views. When they rose from the

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table, he looked at Kathleen with boyish expectancy.

"Are we going to walk?" he asked.

Mrs. Fabian interposed with the best intentions. "I don't think Kathleen had better go, after all, Phil," she said. "She is very tired. She is going to lie down. You won't mind running about this first afternoon by yourself, I'm sure."

Kathleen saw disappointment and then concern grow in the guest's face, for he suddenly observed that she was pale.

"Nonsense, I would n't think of wasting time lying down," she said cheerfully. "Wait a few minutes. I'll be downstairs in a jiffy."

Mrs. Fabian watched her as she ran lightly up the stairway.

"Do you think she ought to go?" asked Phil doubtfully.

"Philip," returned his hostess dryly, "don't ask me what I think. If you ever have a daughter twenty years old and just out of college, you will find the safest, wisest course is not to think at all." But she smiled as she said it; for this time Kathleen's waywardness was not displeasing.

## CHAPTER XIX

### FLASHES OF BLUE

WHEN Kathleen ran downstairs a little later, Phil looked at her in smiling surprise. The elegant Miss Fabian had disappeared. In her stead was a young girl, shorter by the height of a fashionable boot-heel, and with braided hair wound around her head, fastened by a broad bow of black ribbon. Her short, dark-blue skirt reached to her ankles and a Tam o' Shanter crowned her head.

Phil turned to his hostess. "What a strong family resemblance your youngest bears to Miss Fabian. I should know she was her sister if I met her anywhere."

"Yes, this is Kathleen, not Miss Fabian. Don't forget it. When you come back, I expect you to be treating each other as cousins should. Don't let her walk too far, Phil." Mrs. Fabian stifled a yawn. "I think I shall take a nap in the wind-break."

She watched the pair as they moved away from the house. The breeze was tossing the short



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dark hair on Phil's uncovered head. Kathleen, in her rubber-soled, heelless shoes, scarcely reached his ear.

"I'm glad now," mused Mrs. Fabian, "that Kathleen is a Van Ruysler iceberg. If she were a susceptible girl, I would n't wish her to be with that man a minute. What matter if he is a high-minded, fine chap? If he did n't care for her she'd suffer just the same." And Mrs. Fabian gave a yawn mightier than its predecessors and sought her favorite nook.

Meantime Eliza Brewster was making restless sallies from the kitchen to the front room and gazing over toward the boulder cottage. She felt sure Phil would inquire about her, and not let too much time pass before he ran across the field to Mrs. Wright's.

The dinner dishes were washed and cleared away and Eliza had on a clean gingham dress and white apron. Mrs. Wright saw her expectancy.

"Mr. Sidney is a stranger in a strange land," she said. "He will be entirely dependent on his hosts this first day. Why should n't we run over there?" she added with a bright thought. "That's only island neighborliness."

But Eliza shook her head.



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"It would be the very way to begin a new chapter," urged Mrs. Wright.

Eliza gazed from the window by which she was sitting. In the evolution to health and peace which the winter had brought, her causes of offence had gradually retreated into greater perspective, and the broad calm outlook which Mrs. Wright brought to bear on the untoward as well as the agreeable events of life had affected the narrow hardness of her own observations. Nevertheless, to beard the lioness in her den on the very day of her arrival would be a feat entirely beyond Eliza; so she only shook her head again, put on a shade hat, turned up the skirt of her dress, and went out to weed the sweet peas.

Thus it was that, with her back to the boulder cottage and her hands busy with the earth she loved, she did not hear steps that approached on the springy turf; and the first notice she had of the arrival of callers was a man's voice speaking above her.

"Doing finely, aren't they?" was the remark.

Well she knew the voice. She stepped on her petticoat in her haste to arise, and two strong hands went under her arms and lifted her to her feet.



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"Mr. Philip!" she said gladly.

He was laughing down at her, and Pluto was on his shoulder. Kathleen Fabian stood a few feet away, and Eliza nodded a greeting to her while she allowed Phil to shake both her hands, green stains and all. Mrs. Wright, seeing them from a window, came out to welcome Kathleen and meet Phil, and the usual felicitations on the weather and first impressions followed.

"I can see," said Phil, "that I am going to be miserly of my days. I was just asking Miss Kathleen if all this beauty is liable to vanish in a fog-bank to-morrow."

"And she told you not at all liable, I'm sure," said Mrs. Wright; "but if it does — that is the beauty of the island — you'll sit before a blazing open fire and enjoy that quite as well."

Phil shook his head. "The mere amazement of enjoying a fire at the end of the past week would, indeed, be absorbing for a while; but I want to try my hand at this — this new world." He looked off at the blue of the crested waves and the blue of the distant hills. "We are just on our way to the boat now to send a night letter to Pat to get him to send on some stuff. I'm glad you're such a near neighbor, Eliza. I shall be seeing you often."

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"I'll not waste your time now asking you into the house," said Mrs. Wright, "but some wet day you must come in and try our fireplace. When does your brother come, Miss Kathleen?"

"To-morrow; and your niece, Mrs. Wright?"

"In another week, I think. I long to get hold of the child."

After a few more amenities, in which Eliza took but little part, except to gaze at Phil with wistful eyes, the young people started for the wharf.

"What a bonny young man," said Mrs. Wright, looking after them.

"Ain't he just about right?" agreed Eliza proudly. "You see there ain't any philanderin' there. He just wants to work and work. Here, Pluto! Kitty, kitty," for the cat was running after the departing couple. He paused, not from obedience, but because he saw that their course lay downhill and he preferred a sheltered sunny corner by the step.

Phil sent his night letter by the purser of the boat, and the two went back up the hill. Mrs. Fabian beckoned to them from the veranda.

"I thought you would be asleep by this time," said Kathleen.

"I thought I would, too," returned Mrs.



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Fabian. "Come here and let me show you how careless Cap'n James has been."

They followed her to the shelter of the wind-break where her favorite hammock hung, and whirring wings nearly brushed Phil's face as they entered. The nook was enclosed on two sides with glass, and Mrs. Fabian pointed to the snug lofty corner where the swallows had nested. The young were grown and one had ventured out upon a beam.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Kathleen, with soft delight. "We're in time for the coming-out party. Come here, mother, you're frightening them." And Mrs. Fabian found herself seized unsympathetically and drawn to a safe distance.

"But I must sleep, Kathleen. I'm exhausted. I was just dozing off when those creatures swooped across me chattering. I nearly jumped out of the hammock. It was a nervous shock."

"I suppose," said the girl, "they were saying, 'Why could n't those big clumsy human beings have stayed away just one more day!' You must be a mascot, Phil, so many fortunate happenings for your first day."

She was quite unconscious that the name had slipped out, and the guest smiled and seated himself on the railing near her while Mrs.

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Fabian in a rocking-chair began to be consoled for her lost nap.

"Perhaps you would prefer to go on exploring," added Kathleen, "but I really can't miss this function."

"I would n't miss it for a farm," responded the guest, eyes fixed on the nest.

Mrs. Fabian pulled her chair so that its rockers scraped the boards.

"We must all be still as mice," warned Kathleen softly.

Her mother looked up at the seething nest with disfavor. Since her young people considered the show such a treat, she would be obliged to edit the lecture she had been preparing for Captain James. The parent birds flew in and out in a state of great excitement, and one of them fed the venturesome little fellow on the beam, whereupon the others stretched their necks and vociferated with wide mouths.

"But they're so slow," complained Mrs. Fabian. "Why don't they fly and be done with it? I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"They may not go for an hour, or perhaps all night — oh, if they are so unkind as to wait until we're all asleep to-morrow morning!" said Kathleen.

### *Flashes of Blue*

"Then I don't know that I shall wait," said Mrs. Fabian.

"Perhaps you'd better not," agreed the girl, her eyes fixed on the young bird lest he should elude her. "We're none of us invited to this party, you see."

Upon this, the venturesome little swallow appeared to have an attack of homesickness, for, instead of flying away, he hopped back to the nest, where he immediately became very unpopular with his brothers and sisters. Whatever the spot into which he had this morning fitted so snugly, it seemed to have disappeared.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Fabian in exasperation. "Why could n't Phil climb up there and set them all out on the beam and take the nest down. I'm sure it would just help them along."

"Worse than pulling open a rosebud," said Kathleen.

"Very well, then," returned Mrs. Fabian. "I shall go upstairs."

No one objecting, she rose and suited the action to the word; and Kathleen and Phil were left to a welcome solitude.

The parent swallows soon ceased to notice

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the two large, strange birds perched on the veranda railing below.

Kathleen had discarded her Tam and as she sat between Phil and the wind-break, the sun gave him the red glints in her "reserved hair."

The tide was going out, but rushing with a splendid sweep toward the foot of their hill, the sky had occasional billows of downy white lying against its clear blue. The sweet wind swept the fresh grass where daisies were beginning to appear, and all down the irregular coast-line of the island the snowy foam broke on rock and sand.

The iridescent blue of the swallows' backs and the delicate rose of their breasts lent an exquisite touch of color, as they flew and wheeled in the curving flight designed to tempt the solemn-faced young, crowded so uncomfortably in the outgrown nest.

Again one struggled out upon the beam. The cunning parents fed it, while the others begged in vain. Then again the old birds were away in airy flight.

"Come out, come out in the sunshine," they seemed to cry, wheeling back toward the nest. "Come out to the ecstasy of wind and waves.



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The whole world, the world of sea and sky, is ours."

Kathleen for an instant turned about to her companion. "Do you see how he can resist?" she asked.

"Kathleen!" exclaimed Phil.

She turned back, but too late. In that instant the young bird on the beam had flown.

"They're right there, though," said Phil excitedly, and indeed the birds kept wheeling above the bluff, when, wonder of wonders, the other young ones, struggling to the edge of the nest as if unable to resist the intoxication of the sight, flew out into the open.

For a minute the bright air was astir with the whir of wings. It was impossible to distinguish the young birds from the old; then they all alighted on the ridge-pole of a small summer house which stood on the edge of the bluff.

Kathleen turned to Phil, her hands clasped on her breast. He thought her enchanted eyes and smile suggested the unlocking of one of her inner doors.

"Yes," he replied, nodding, "I never saw anything prettier than that."

The girl looked back at the summer house. The birds were still sitting there all in a row.



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The two watched until again wings were afloat in the bright air; then they ran down the steps to see what would be the next resting-place, and saw the birds alight on posts and netting about the tennis court. When again they flew, they disappeared.

Kathleen sighed. "In my next incarnation," she said, "I choose to be a swallow on Brewster's Island."

"Then," said Phil, looking at her radiant face, "I'm glad I happened to be a man during your present one."

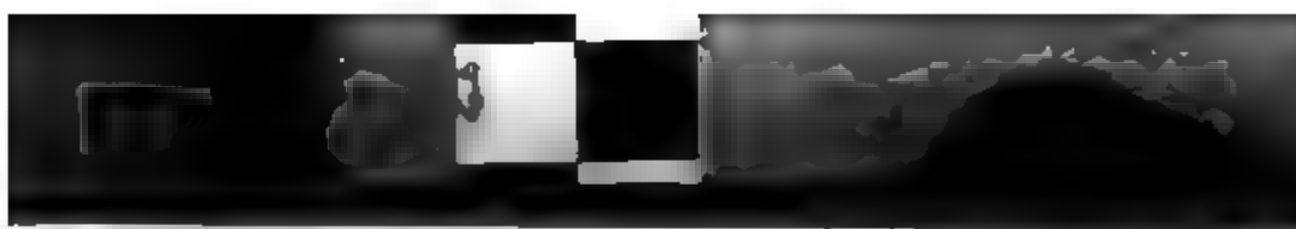
The open door closed. Phil thought he could almost hear it click. In an instant the dark eyes were the reflective ones he had known.

"Thank you kindly, sir," she said. "That was good fun. Shall we go on now with our interrupted walk?"

He continued to regard her. "I have an idea that you have walked enough. Twice up and down this hill and over to Mrs. Wright's is enough."

"Ho!" returned the girl lightly, "I walk all day here."

"Yes, after you have cooled off and slept for a night or two; but I suggest the hammock now."



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They were standing in the shade and not a hint of red showed in the girl's soft hair. "There are weeks to rest in," she said. "We ought to make the most of this perfect day."

Phil still regarded her. The excitement of the closing college experiences and the city heat had left their mark; and he did not know of other and deeper reasons for her weariness. The flush of pleasure in the swallow ball had departed.

"Come," he said decidedly, "let's try the hammock."

"Really, Mr. Sidney," she answered, smiling, "I know when I'm tired."

But he proceeded up the veranda steps and she followed him into the wind-break.

"I'm willing," he said, "to go two steps forward and one back in my acquaintance with you; but I draw the line at two back. It sounded very friendly a few minutes ago when you called me Phil. I hope you'll see your way clear to doing it again sometime."

While he spoke, Philip was testing the ropes of the hammock.

"Oh, I'm sure I did n't call you Phil," she said in surprise.

"Let me see. Did I call you Kathleen?"

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"I think you did," she replied, a delicate formality in her voice; "but the circumstances certainly excused it."

"I hope they will continue to excuse it, for I feel it coming on that I shall do it again. You took off Miss Fabian with your tailor gown." He turned and faced her. "Did n't you?" he added.

She shrugged her shoulders, and smiled again. "Perhaps."

"Then get right down on this couch, little Kathleen," he ordered, smiling, and after a moment's hesitation the girl obeyed. He drew over her the linen coverlet that had lain on a neighboring chair, and looked, not at her, but with fascinated eyes through the broad sheets of glass which guarded the hammock from the wind.

"Now, if you can feel sober enough to sleep in this intoxicating place, do so," he said.

Kathleen, propped high on cushions, folded her arms beneath her head.

"But is n't it questionable courtesy for both your hostesses to go to sleep, no matter how sober they may be?" she asked.

"There's another hostess here," he returned, with a brilliant look down into her uplifted eyes.



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"Yes, I know," said Kathleen.

"My best girl," said Phil, moving out of the wind-break.

Kathleen smiled. "Yes, I like her, too," she answered. "I never had a lonely moment on this island in my life; so I shall not worry about you. There's another hammock around on the other side of the porch. Why don't you go to sleep yourself?"

"Because I'm afraid I should wake up in Gramercy Park," returned Phil, and, vaulting over the porch railing, he disappeared from Kathleen's view.

Walking to the back of the house, he gazed down at the waters of the cove, then across the field to the long low white farmhouse where he had found Eliza, then back again at the water. "Miss Manning said I should stay here if I had to live under a rock," he reflected.

One week: one week was all he had planned for, although Mrs. Fabian had pressed him for two.

What were two weeks now in prospect? He knew his aunt would welcome him for an indefinite stay, but Kathleen doubtless had plans for guests, and moreover Edgar's advent was but one little night away. He shuddered at the

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prospect of the gilded youth's questions and comments on his work.

He decided to walk around the edge of the island. Then he looked back toward Mrs. Wright's house. He remembered the look of disappointment in the depths of Eliza's shade hat when he had paid the fleeting visit on his way to the wharf.

"I'll go to see her once more," he reflected, "and have her off my mind, for I'm afraid I shall forget when I get a little deeper in here."

Accordingly, he moved off with long swinging steps through the soft deep grass, and Mrs. Wright saw him coming. She was sitting with her book on the rustic bench which took the place of piazza at the old farmhouse.

"Eliza," she called, "your young man is coming back."

It was an hour afterward that Mrs. Fabian, her grudge against the swallows mollified by a nap, came downstairs to the living-room to reconnoitre. All was so still that she knew that either those dull birds were still dawdling, or else that her young people had seen them off and were away again.

She peered from a window into the glass

## *Flashes of Blue*

enclosure, and to her surprise saw her daughter asleep in the hammock. How slender and pale looked the sleeping face.

"Poor child. She's worn out, I wonder where Phil is."

As if the gaze had disturbed the sleeper, Kathleen turned on her pillow and opened her eyes.

Mrs. Fabian promptly left the house and came out to her swinging couch.

"So you took forty winks, too," she said, casting a glance up at the deserted nest. "Where's Phil?"

"I don't know," returned Kathleen languidly. "I scarcely know where I am."

"I hope I did n't wake you, gazing from the window; but it's no use your trying to sleep again, for Cap'n James is coming up at last with the trunks. Kathleen, I've had a bright idea," added Mrs. Fabian alertly.

The girl stifled a yawn.

"You know Phil won't stay here unless he's working. I'm going to have him do our portraits for father's Christmas present!"

Kathleen was wide awake instantly.

"It would cost so much, mother," she said.

Mrs. Fabian stared at her. "What an idea!"

### *The Inner Flame*

she retorted. "Phil has n't come to enormous prices yet!"

"But you would not want to pay him a small price. It would n't be right."

"Since when have you become so economical?" asked Mrs. Fabian, laughing. "After Christmas, I must tell your father of this talk. How he will laugh. You and Edgar should be shaken up. Phil's sketches of his mother show his gift for getting likeness. I don't know whether he has ever painted a portrait, but I have every confidence in him."

"Then have yours done, dear," said Kathleen. "You're looking as well as usual, but nothing would hire me to have my lantern jaws perpetuated."

"Oh, a week or two of this will make you bloom, child."

"Yes, especially my nose," returned the girl.

Her thoughts were working fast. She had been happy in the thought that they were now in the place where neither her mother nor Edgar could commit themselves to any large expense. Her father had said that by autumn he should know where he stood. She could not say any more, however, for Captain James's wagon had arrived, and Mrs. Fabian went to



### *Flashes of Blue*

see to the disposition of the trunks and to give her caretaker explicit low-voiced directions as to examining for and eliminating any and all birds' nests found in future on the premises, and at last she brought him around to the wind-break to point out the one he was to remove now, with all its traces, at the earliest possible moment.

Kathleen, still lying, her hands clasped under her head, looked up at him with a smile.

"I'm so glad you did n't notice that nest any sooner, Cap'n James," she said. "You might have disturbed it."

Captain James chewed a wisp of grass and favored the girl with a wink.

"It was n't like you," said Mrs. Fabian, with elaborately gentle rebuke, "not to have this wind-break cleaner. Look at the windows."

"I had Betsy Eaton wash 'em on the outside," said the captain imperturbably, and winked at Kathleen again.

"It was fine of you, Cap'n James," she laughed. "They flew to-day, and I was at the party."

Mrs. Fabian looked from one to the other of the laughing ones, in injured dignity.

"Very well," she said at last; "now, if you're



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quite sure it won't disturb the plans of man or beast, Cap'n James, I'd like to have this wind-break cleaned."

"'Nuff said," returned the man, and once more grinning down at the girl's laughing face, he went back to his helper sitting on the wagon.



## CHAPTER XX

### ELIZA SURRENDERS

ELIZA had begun some work in the kitchen which she could not at once leave when Mrs. Wright called her, so the latter brought Phil into the house.

"No wonder Eliza did n't expect me twice a day," he said. "What an interesting old place this is."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Wright; "and we are making the most of the few days that it will still be all ours. Miss Jane Foster, who owns it, comes almost immediately to take possession and receive her summer boarders."

"But won't that be a rest for you?"

"Scarcely; for Eliza has taken such a laboring oar that I live in the lap of luxury, so far as work is concerned."

Eliza came in, in time to hear this statement. "Don't you believe it, Mr. Philip. She's the busy bee of the house; but we've both had just enough to do."

"Eliza!" exclaimed Phil, approaching and

### *The Inner Flame*

taking both her hard hands. "Why, I did n't half see you in that shade hat! You look like a new being."

Eliza laughed and colored under the scrutiny. Her added pounds had distributed themselves comfortably and becomingly. She did, indeed, bear little resemblance to the haggard creature of the autumn.

"Why, let me look at you!" went on the artist gladly. "You've robbed me of a whole lot of good material. If you posed for me now, it would amount to nothing more than the portrait of a lady."

Mrs. Wright laughed, well pleased, and amused, too, at the embarrassed manner in which Eliza pulled away her hands.

"But you stay on here, I suppose, just the same," said Phil, turning back to his hostess.

"Oh, yes. I've taken a room for Violet, my niece, and Miss Foster has made a business arrangement with Eliza to be her helper, so the only great difference will be the arrival of new people."

Considerations immediately ran through Phil's head of this home as a possibility for his prolonged stay. Second thought, however, pictured the going and coming of summer



### *Eliza Surrenders*

boarders and the impossibility of privacy. Besides, he could not afford it.

He picked up a small black book which his eye had caught lying beside the Bible on Mrs. Wright's table.

"Oh!" he said, raising his eyebrows and looking at her with a smile.

"Do you know it?" she asked.

"My mother lives by it," he returned.

"Then her boy does, I'm sure," said Mrs. Wright.

"He tries to," answered Phil. "I was just thinking now of our philosophy, and trying to know that, if it's right for me to stay on this island, it will come to pass. I feel as if I could do a lot of work here."

"Mrs. Fabian will have too much of a houseful?"

"Perhaps not; but there could n't be any independence in that; and I could n't bring paint rags into her spick-and-span cottage."

"Take board here," suggested Mrs. Wright.

Phil shook his head. "I don't want to give the price for a long pull. Miss Manning prophesied that I should live under a rock rather than leave. I'll go rock-hunting some day."

"There must be some way, Mr. Philip!"

### *The Inner Flame*

exclaimed Eliza, who had listened attentively. The intensity of her manner reminded Phil of other days.

"You should have more stables on the island," he returned. "It's very thoughtless of you."

"We can all help him, remember, Eliza," said Mrs. Wright — "you know I've told you — by thinking right."

"Goodness knows, I'd think anything that'd keep him here," returned Eliza bluntly. "He's as white as a candle, and it makes me sick to think o' the perspiration runnin' into his eyes. What d'you want me to think? I'll say the moon's made o' green cheese, if it'll do any good."

"No, it only does good to think the truth. It's law. You remember how I've told you that we live under laws and they aren't material ones? Our thoughts are our whole concern. Get thought right, and action takes care of itself. You're stopping up one of the channels through which good can come to you and yours. You consider Mr. Sidney one of yours, I'm sure."

Eliza averted her eyes uncomfortably.

"Yes," went on Mrs. Wright, smiling, "I'm speaking right out in meeting, because you've

## *Eliza Surrenders*

told me that Mr. Sidney knows of your antagonism."

"She's talkin' about the barrel," remarked Eliza dryly.

"Oh, the barrel!" laughed Phil. "I'd forgotten about that. So has Aunt Isabel, I fancy."

"I'll bet a cookie she went to your room and tried to get it," said Eliza, eyeing him shrewdly.

Phil nodded. "Yes, she did."

Eliza struck her hands together with satisfaction. "I'd give more'n a cookie to have seen her face when she got there," she said triumphantly.

"No, I was n't talking about the barrel," continued Mrs. Wright. "That is your own affair: whether you care to keep those family treasures or to give them up. I was speaking in general about your forgiving Mrs. Fabian as you would be forgiven, and banishing discord from the atmosphere. How can you tell how much sunlight that cloud is holding back from this dear boy of Mrs. Ballard's?"

Eliza stared into space and bit her lip. The three were standing in a group near the table.

"Well, sit down, anyway," she said briefly, and they did so.

Phil saw that there was method in Mrs.

## *The Inner Flame*

Wright's choosing of this particular opportunity to make a point. Hers was the face of a peacemaker and it was easy to see what pain she would find in discord.

Now she turned to Phil and asked him about his father and mother, and he told her of the mountains, and his periodical longing for them. This place, he added, gave him a similar sense of exhilaration. It seemed as if he were breathing again for the first time since November.

"You've got to stay," said Eliza nervously; "that's all there is about it."

He smiled. "The bark on a tree is n't as tight as I am," he replied. "I've planned to make my money do just so much."

"With God all things are possible," remarked Mrs. Wright.

"Yes," he laughed; "I'm going to look for a cave with a skylight."

Eliza's thoughts were painfully busy. The constant dropping of the winter had made an impression on their adamant. Supposing there should be anything in what Mrs. Wright just said. Supposing God were to punish her for continuing to hate an enemy; punish her by holding back some benefit from her dear one's *protégé*.



### *Eliza Surrenders*

She stirred around in her chair during a pause. "I've been thinkin' to-day," she said carelessly, "that I did n't exactly know what I was goin' to do with that barrel. I've got to bring it down from upstairs before Jennie gets here."

"Let me do that for you," said Phil quickly. "I've been honing to lift something heavy all the afternoon. I've felt as if I could lick my weight in wild cats ever since dinner."

He started up with such eagerness that Eliza mechanically arose and went to the stairs, Phil following; and Mrs. Wright, a hopeful light in her eyes, looked on.

"We've got to get these rooms ready for boarders," explained Eliza as they went up to the second story. "It's real clever of you to lug the barrel down for me."

Phil smiled covertly as he recognized the old bone of contention with the flourishing address he had executed, and he steered it down the narrow stairs successfully.

Eliza had preceded him nimbly.

As soon as she reached the living-room, Mrs. Wright approached her.

"Where are you going to put it?" she asked, looking wistfully at Eliza.



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"Oh, anywhere," replied the latter with bravado.

"Jane would n't like it in here, of course," remarked Mrs. Wright.

"Well, I suppose I have a right to my own room, have n't I?" Eliza retorted sharply.

"Would n't it be very much in the way, dear? You have it fixed so pretty in there."

"Well, what's the reason it can't stand in the shed?" asked Eliza, with defiance.

Mrs. Wright shook her head. "'Where moth and rust doth corrupt,'" she said slowly.

Phil now had the barrel down, and was standing beside it, waiting.

"Whither away, now?" he asked.

"Eliza," said Mrs. Wright, "there's a wheelbarrow out in the shed."

Eliza colored and bit her lip. "Do you know," she said, turning to Phil, "Mrs. Wright wants me to give those things to Mrs. Fabian?"

"Well, it would tickle Aunt Isabel almost to pieces," he admitted.

"Do you see any reason or justice in it?"

Phil smiled. "It's a luxury to do an unreasonable thing once in a while," he answered.

"If I thought it would do you the least bit o' good," said Eliza, "I'd do anything. I'd

### *Eliza Surrenders*

find a white hair in a black dog's tail and burn it by the light o' the moon, at midnight," she added scornfully; "but unluckily I ain't superstitious."

Phil glanced at Mrs. Wright's sweet, earnest face, and understood that she had thought deeply of the prospect of discord between the two cottages.

"Come on, Eliza," he said, with boyish enthusiasm, "it would be great fun to see Aunt Isabel's face. Even if you were after revenge, coals of fire are a mighty punishment, and if you're only being magnanimous and letting bygones be bygones why, who knows but it will be the means of my finding the cave with the skylight?"

Eliza turned away suddenly from his laughing eyes. "All right," she said, "take it! I'll show you where the wheelbarrow is; and when you've got it across that hubbly field you won't be looking for wild cats to fight."

"Oh, but you'll steady the barrel."

"Will I! Well, you can guess again, young man." Eliza's eyes flashed.

"Oh, pshaw," he said. "Don't make two bites of a cherry. If the barrel goes, you go."

### *The Inner Flame*

Eliza met his gay, determined look with exasperation.

"This is persecution," she declared angrily; then added beseechingly, "Don't make me, Mr. Philip."

"I could n't let you miss it," he returned. "We have the white hair of the black dog, but, you see, we have to burn it."

Eliza looked appealingly toward Mrs. Wright, whose face was expectant.

"Dear Eliza," she said.

"Don't you 'dear' me," snapped Eliza. "Come this way, Mr. Philip."

She marched out of the room, and Mrs. Wright seized and squeezed Phil's hand as he passed. He gave her a laughing look.

Soon the march across the field began. Mrs. Wright watched them from the window. Eliza, her shade hat tied primly down beneath her chin, steadied the barrel when Phil's route encountered too great an irregularity.

"Dear martyr," thought Mrs. Wright, who had caught a glimpse of her companion's expression as they moved away. "She does love that beautiful boy. I hope her reward will come soon."

Captain James had just driven back down

## *Eliza Surrenders*

the hill after bringing up the trunks when Phil and Eliza reached the shaven sward about the Fabian cottage.

Phil dropped the wheelbarrow at the steps.

"Wait here a minute, Eliza, till I reconnoitre," he said. "This was a sleeping castle when I left."

"Now, if they're asleep —" said Eliza, hastily and hopefully; but Phil had disappeared quietly around the corner which led to the wind-break. As he approached, the sound of voices mingled with the tide, so he advanced with confidence.

Kathleen was sitting on the edge of the hammock facing her mother, who looked around as Phil came in view.

"Here we are, awake at last," she said. "Where have you been? How well you look! You have quite a flush."

He came close to her. "I've been helping Eliza Brewster bring you a present," he said.

Mrs. Fabian was all attention, but a look of resentment spread over her countenance.

"She is here with me," went on Phil, low and rapidly. "It means a good deal, you know. I hope you will be very nice to her."

Kathleen, alertly comprehending, rose from

## *The Inner Flame*

the hammock and moved past her mother and around to where Eliza stood by the steps, schooling herself.

"You can't get out of a barrel what ain't in it," she reflected. "'T ain't any use tappin' a barrel o' vinegar and bein' mad 'cause maple syrup don't come out."

"You scarcely spoke to me this morning," said Kathleen pleasantly, "you were so glad to see Mr. Sidney."

Eliza shook hands awkwardly. Kathleen Fabian seemed even to her prejudice to ring true. "She don't inherit vinegar," thought Eliza. "I don't know why I should n't give her the benefit o' the doubt. Maybe she is maple clear through."

Mrs. Fabian now came in stately fashion around the corner into view. Her eyes caught sight of the barrel and glistened. It was almost impossible to believe that —

"How do you do, Eliza?" she said, in mellifluous tones. "Mr. Sidney tells me you wish to see me —"

"Yes, about this barrel," interrupted Eliza, with nervous haste. "It's some o' the things Mrs. Ballard left me that I thought you'd enjoy havin'. It's her silver and china, just as

### *Eliza Surrenders*

I packed 'em in New York. I have n't taken out anything."

"Why, really, Eliza, do you know, I appreciate that very much," said Mrs. Fabian graciously, "and I shall enjoy them far more here than I could in New York. I —"

"Yes, 'm," said Eliza, "I've got to hurry back to get supper. We have a real early tea."

"No, not until you've come in and seen where Aunt Mary's things are to be. I really could n't allow you to go without sitting down a minute to rest."

"No, no, thank you," said Eliza, more hurriedly.

"Perhaps you did come in and see the cottage while it was being prepared for us."

"No, ma'am," returned Eliza, arrested in flight. "I've never been as near to it as this."

"I wish you would come in, then," said Kathleen. "We think it's very pretty."

So Eliza yielded, and Phil followed her into the house, showing her the views from the windows, and before she came out again she had exchanged remarks with Mrs. Fabian on the increased price of lobsters and other practical subjects.

### *The Inner Flame*

"Really quite human," commented Mrs. Fabian when the guest had departed.

"And how well she looks," said Kathleen.

"Now," remarked her mother complacently, "you see my own has come to me. I knew Eliza was half-crazy last autumn. I just anticipate pulling over those funny old things."

Meanwhile Phil and Eliza were retracing their steps across the field.

"There! that did n't hurt much, did it?" he asked.

"I have n't got much use for her," replied Eliza, "but I do believe Kathleen Fabian's a sensible girl."

"Our friend Edgar is coming to-morrow," remarked Phil.

Eliza looked up at him shrewdly from beneath the shade hat. "Is that the reason you want to be a cave man?"

Phil laughed. "Perhaps it's one," he admitted. "He's a rather — well — pervasive person, we'll say. I need elbow room to work. Is n't this a great place, Eliza?" The speaker's eyes swept the surroundings. "You're farther from the sea than the Fabians. You have a grand orchard, I see," added Phil, laughing; "or does it belong to that little cottage over there?"

### *Eliza Surrenders*

“Where? Oh, you mean the chicken-house?”

“Chicken-house! Are the hens here so high-toned they have to have windows besides their roosts? There are places out West where the reason for the cows giving little milk is said to be because they become so enchanted with the scenery that they forget to eat. I suppose those hens go up to the second floor to watch the sunset.”

Phil looked curiously at the little story and a half building guarded by the balm-of-Gilead trees.

“Law, there ain’t any hens there,” replied Eliza. “A pig would n’t live there now. I’m itchin’ to burn it down, it’s so dirty.”

“Nobody lives there?” asked Phil.

“No, not since Granny Foster that it was built for. She scared us children out of our wits in her time, and I s’pose we pestered her, ’cause of course we was imps and could n’t keep away. We’d rather play tricks on her than eat, but only a few got their courage up to do more than knock on the door and run away. That door! My! to think I can walk up to it and open it. It seems wonderful even now.”

“Let’s go and open it,” said Phil, eagerly, beginning to stride in that direction.



### *The Inner Flame*

"Oh, no, Mr. Philip, keep away. It's too dirty and musty in there for words. Jennie quit keepin' hens a long time ago, and I guess she just let it rot away there, 'cause 't wa'n't worth cleanin'!"

"Oh, but I want to see where little Eliza was scared," persisted Phil, hurrying so fast that Eliza was obliged to run after him. She stood away a little, though, with her long nose lifted while he opened the door and his eager eyes swept the interior.

"Don't you go in there, oh, don't, Mr. Philip," she said. "I can tell you just what there is, a parlor and a kitchen, and a rough kind o' steps that go upstairs where there's only half a floor. It would make a grand bonfire. I wish Jennie'd let us."

"She owns it, does she? The woman that's going to keep your boarding-house?"

"Oh, yes; all this land's hers and the orchard."

Phil closed the dingy door and walked around back of the cottage. Apparently, Granny Foster had liked the view of the open ocean, contrary to the taste of most of the women on the island, who had good reason to dread its mighty power. At any rate, while the front of the little

## *Eliza Surrenders*

house grew straight out of the grass, the back had once boasted a piazza, which had fallen away and capsized in the field which ran down to the water's edge.

"What a view your old lady had!" said Phil, standing still and listening to the rustling leaves that whispered in the orchard.

"'T is a sightly place," said Eliza.

The artist looked with starry eyes over the little cottage again and then at his companion.

"It's wonderful," he said.

"'M-h'm," agreed Eliza; "and it'll do you all the good in the world if you can only stay here."

Phil's radiant smile beamed upon her.

"Why, I'm going to stay. Can't you see what I'm thinking?"

"No," replied Eliza, staring at him curiously.

"I've found my cave." He waved his hand toward the chicken-house. "Do you think Jennie'll let me have it?"

"Mr. Philip!" exclaimed Eliza distractedly, clasping her hard hands as his meaning broke upon her. "There ain't any use to talk about it even! How could I ever clean that place for you!"

"I shan't let you touch it! Hurrah!" ex-

## *The Inner Flame*

claimed the artist, turning a somersault in the grass and coming right-side up so suddenly that Eliza blinked.

"Oh, my sorrows and cares!" she mourned; "it's the craziest idea" —

"When, when did you say she's coming?"

"To-morrow. Dear, dear!" Eliza was half laughing and half crying.

"Then I've only to wait one night. Oh, it's too good to be true, like everything else that happens to me." Another flight of long arms and legs accompanied by a whoop of joy, and once more Phil was right-side up and catching Eliza by the arm.

"Let's go and tell Mrs. Wright," he exclaimed, and hurried his companion toward the farmhouse, where Mrs. Wright was sitting on the rustic bench.

"He's crazy," declared Eliza. "Tell him so. There must be lots o' better places. That would n't smell good in a thousand years."

But when Phil had divulged his great plan, Mrs. Wright nodded.

"The very thing," she said. "I'm sure Jane will let you use it free, and be glad to have it put in shape. Then you can take as many or as few meals here as you like."

## *Eliza Surrenders*

Her calm, happy approval closed Eliza's lips in a desperate silence.

"I must rush back to my hostesses," said Phil. "Hurrah for us, Eliza. I'll go to every boat to meet Jennie."

He started across the field on a long, swinging run.

"Splendid boy," mused Mrs. Wright, aloud, looking after him.

Eliza had sunk on the bench, dumb.

"Now, then," her friend turned to her; "see how you've helped him."

Eliza's eyes snapped. "Do you mean to say," she retorted, speaking fast and defiantly, "that if I had n't gone over to Mrs. Fabian's and given her the dishes, he would n't 'a' found that chicken-house?"

Mrs. Wright smiled and shook her head.

"There's only one thing I know, Eliza," she said with deliberation, "and that is that Love is Omnipotence, and that in every problem we mortals have the choice of looking down into error and discord, or up into Truth and Harmony."

Eliza's breath caught in her throat, and she felt so strangely stirred that she rose abruptly and went into the house.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SINGER

THE combination of at last having a definite aim in life, and the cutting rebuke received in his father's library, had caused Edgar Fabian to wake up.

On the hot morning when he took the train for Portland, he even looked a little pale from the unwonted vigil of the night before. As he tossed on his bed in the small hours, he had fretted at the heat, but it was not temperature that made him survey the causes for his father's drastic words; and he recalled the emotion which Kathleen had not been able to conceal with a sort of affectionate dismay. Kathleen was a good sort, after all. She had worked for him, he knew, and mitigated the situation so far as she could.

"Father wants to be shown, does he?" he thought, clenching his teeth. "Well, I'll show him. I will."

His soul was still smarting when he boarded the train in the breathless station and the



### *The Singer*

porter carried his suitcase to his chair in the day coach.

A group of girls were standing about the neighboring seat, but he did not regard them. One of them observed him, and for her the thermometer suddenly went up ten degrees more.

"Hurry girls, you must go," she said, swiftly and peremptorily, moving with them to the end of the car. "How I wish you didn't have to!" Then, as they reached the door, the flushed one squeezed their arms. "That was Mr. Fabian, girls!" she added.

"Where? Where?" they ejaculated, looking wildly about.

"Back there in the very next chair to mine. Oh, get off, dears."

They regarded the rosy face.

"Slyboots!" exclaimed Roxana.

"Indeed, I knew nothing of it!" declared Violet.

"Very well." Regina spoke in hasty exhortation. "The sun shines hard enough for you to make all the hay there is. I've a great mind to throw a pump after you!"

The friends slipped off just in time, and Violet waved them a laughing adieu; then her face sobered while her eyes shone. She could

## *The Inner Flame*

not go back to her place at once. The combination was more than flesh and blood could endure nonchalantly: her work finished, she starting for the island earlier than she had hoped, with the joyful anticipation of surprising her aunt, and, instead of journeying alone, to find *the* man beside her.

Violet was extremely indignant with herself for calling Edgar *the* man. Never one thing had he done to deserve it. There was no one on earth to whom in reality she was more indifferent. She allowed conductors, porter, passengers, and luggage to stumble by and over her in the narrow passage while she reflected upon the utter uncongeniality of herself and Edgar Fabian; the gulf fixed between their lots, their habits, their tastes. A man who was so artificial that he could n't like Brewster's Island. How could any girl with genuine feeling do more than politely endure him!

Violet finally, having been bumped and trodden on until she realized that she was being scowled at by all comers, stepped under the portière into the ladies' room and looked in the glass. The neatest and trimmest of visions regarded her.

"I don't care a snap how I look, but I am



### *The Singer*

dreadfully warm," she thought, and taking a powder-puff from her mesh bag, she raised her veil and cooled her crimson cheeks and dabbed her nose; then she pinned the veil back closely; and gave her bright eyes a challenging and warning gaze.

"If you dare!" she murmured, then moved out into the aisle again and sought her place.

Edgar had hung up his hat, his back was to the car, and his gloomy eyes gazed out of the window. Violet sank into her chair, turning its back to him. "There!" she thought sternly, "we can ride this way all day. There's not the slightest necessity for recognition."

An hour passed and this seemed only too true. She took up the copy of "Life" which Roxana had left with her, and looked through it with more grim determination than is usually brought to bear upon that enlivening sheet.

Everything continued to be quiet behind her. She wondered if Edgar had gone to sleep; but what was it to her what he was doing? She became conscious that there were more strokes on the illustrations than the artists had intended.

"I must take off my veil!" she reflected.

Of course, no girl can take off her veil and hat



### *The Inner Flame*

without making some stir. She hoped she should not attract her neighbor's attention by these movements. She did n't.

At last all was comfortably arranged, and she picked up the periodical which had been Regina's offering and looked at her chatelaine watch, wondering how much time had been wasted already.

She never before heard of a man who stayed in his seat on the train unless he was an invalid. One would think he would at least walk up and down once in a while. She turned her chair a little away from the window and toward the aisle. A fat man who was her vis-à-vis glanced at her, and finding the glance most satisfactory, looked again, long enough to make her aware of him. She swung slowly back toward the window, but not so far that she could not command movements in the aisle.

Of course, Mr. Fabian was asleep. He had probably been turning night into day in the festivities which society events had recorded as preceding Mrs. Larrabee's departure for Europe.

The thought was a tonic. She loved to realize how insignificant and selfish was the life this young man led; making him not worth a second

## *The Singer*

thought to a womanly woman who scorned to associate with any man to whom she could not look up, and he had n't shaved off that blond pointed mustache, either; how she despised mustaches.

"Why — why, Miss Manning." The interested greeting broke forth directly above her, and she started and looked up straight into the scorned mustache. "How wonderful," said Edgar. "I was just wondering who liked the 'Century' better upside down than right-side up; then I noticed that whoever it was had pretty hair, so I looked again and saw it was you."

"I" — stammered Violet, blushing violently and dropping the magazine, — "I think I was so sleepy I did n't know — I — where did you spring from?"

"Just now from the smoking-room, but I'm here, right here in this chair next to you. Can you beat it? Are you for the island?"

"Yes."

"I, too. Great that we should meet. Let me turn your chair around. I was never so glad to see you."

"Why? Were you bored?" Violet's tone and manner of courteous indifference were so

## *The Inner Flame*

excellent that they deceived the fat man, who regarded the *contretemps* over the top of his paper and felt quite chivalrously impatient of the "fresh guy" who had interrupted the young traveller's meditations; and heartily commiserated the girl for the coincidence which had made her the prey of an acquaintance.

"No, not more bored than usual," replied Edgar, having arranged the chairs at the best angle for sociability, "but if you talk to me I may forget how I want to smoke."

Violet raised her eyebrows. "Oh, I'm to be useful and not ornamental," she said with an icily sweet smile.

"You can't help being ornamental," said Edgar, drumming nervously on the arm of his chair. "There, that's the last compliment I'm going to give you. I warn you. I'm a bear to-day. I'm sorry for you." The speaker was pale and Violet laid both pallor and nervousness to the door of the vivacious lady about to sail for foreign shores.

"Yes," she replied, looking at him blandly. "I saw that your charming friend Mrs. Larrabee is leaving."

Edgar looked around quickly. "Yes, she's leaving. I bade her good-bye last night."

## *The Singer*

"Is that why you wish to smoke all the time?" asked Violet, with cooing gentleness.

"All the time! Great Scott! I've had just one cigarette since I got up."

"You said you had just come from the smoking-room."

"Yes, but I had n't been in. That's the trouble. I'm cutting it out."

"Why? Have you made a virtuous vow?"

"I'm afraid I'm in no mood for joking this morning." Edgar frowned and twisted his mustache.

Violet spoke with laughing sweetness.

"Nothing is more easy than to escape it," she said, and deftly turned her chair with its back to him.

He seized it by the arm and twisted it around again.

"No, you don't," he said. "Forgive me; you know the stereotyped advice to newly married couples about the two bears; 'bear and forbear,' don't you? Well, remember it, please."

"I don't see the parallel," said Violet coolly; "and anyway, is the advice directed entirely at the woman?"

"No, I'm bearing with you now for turning your back to me, you who are going to teach

## *The Inner Flame*

me to clog when we reach the island." He gave her the smile designed to melt the icy heart.

"In consideration," returned Violet, "for a continuous ripple of song."

Edgar suddenly looked important, and gazed out of the window. Then he turned back to the girl who was regarding him.

"What do you think of my voice — honestly?" he asked.

"I think it is one of the most beautiful I have ever heard," she answered promptly.

He nodded slowly. "I fished to some purpose, did n't I," he said gravely. "Well, since you really think that, and I've always admired your sincerity, you may be interested to know that I have given up business in order to cultivate it."

There being nobody present who was employed in Mr. Fabian's office, the dignity of this statement was not impaired by hilarity; and Violet, greatly impressed, clasped her hands.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she said. "All your friends will be so glad."

Had she known it, she might have added, "and all your business associates"; but neither word nor look minimized the enthusiasm of the moment.



### *The Singer*

Enough of Violet's faith and admiration shone in her speaking eyes to fall like balm on Edgar's wounded soul. He began to heal under it; began to mount into his wonted atmosphere of assurance.

"I've been studying ever since January with Mazzini. I've kept quiet about it because, after all," — the speaker spread his hands in a modest gesture, — "he might be mistaken in his extremely enthusiastic estimate."

"Oh, no, no!" said Violet earnestly. Edgar drank more healing from the fountain of her eyes. "What shall you do? Go into opera?"

"I don't know yet," replied the aspirant, with the air of one who was holding Mr. Hammerstein in the hollow of his hand, uncertain whether to throw him over or to be gracious. "I'm very much alone in this," he added, meeting the girl's gaze with an air of confidence. "Of course my father and mother and sister are willing; in fact, they are pleased that I have undertaken this."

"Think of giving up smoking!" exclaimed Violet. "What a sacrifice that means to a man! I should think your family would see by that how in earnest you are."

"Yes, they believe I am in earnest; but when

## *The Inner Flame*

one in a family is keenly temperamental and the others are not, there are only certain planes on which they can meet, you understand?"

"By all means." Violet understood perfectly.

"I have certain ideas that I never divulge to them. They would only laugh. What would it mean to them if I were to say that I had purple moods — and red moods —"

"Probably nothing," returned Violet, quickly and with close attention. "Black and green and blue are the only common ones."

Edgar looked at her suspiciously. Had the fountain of healing admiration vanished, and was she laughing at him? Not at all. She was regarding him with a respect and awe which he could not doubt.

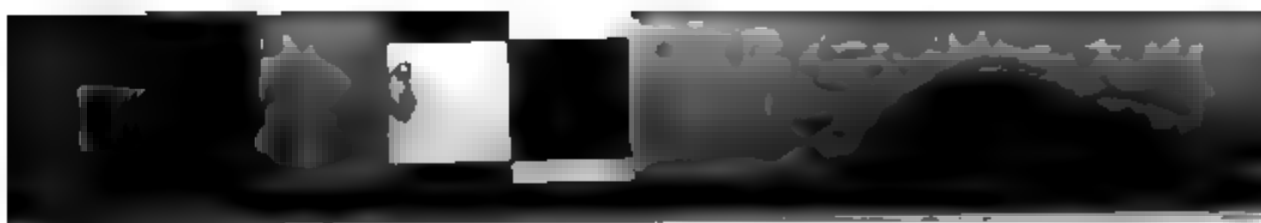
"Explain the others to me. Do you think you could?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not," he answered gently, "but, well, for instance, while in the purple mood I could never learn to clog. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Ah, yes," returned Violet fervently. "I see. You would be too intense."

"Exactly. In the red, I might. It would depend on which way it took me."

His listener nodded earnestly. "Yes, yes.



### *The Singer*

A berserk rage is red. They always see red in books."

"But so is a glowing sunset red," said Edgar. "The red of joy. I see you understand. Oh, what rest it is to have people understand!"

Violet glowed. Some memory recurred to her. "Does Mr. Sidney know about this?" she asked.

Edgar shrugged his shoulders. "He is at the island with my people. They may have told him."

The girl's rosy lips set. "Now," she wondered, "would he chuckle over foolish sketches of conceited robins! At all events, he would very soon give it up."

The two travellers had a wonderful day together, undaunted by heat and cinders.

Edgar gave Violet as dainty a luncheon as circumstances permitted, and when they reached Portland too late for the last boat, he left her at her hotel with the promise to call for her in the morning.

The boat they took next day was the same one which bore Miss Jane Foster to her summer home; so when, after the cooling ride down the bay, they arrived at Brewster's Island and saw Philip Sidney and Eliza Brewster waiting with



## *The Inner Flame*

Kathleen, Edgar pointed Eliza out to Violet with amusement.

"I wonder how Sidney enjoys his shadow," he remarked, "I suppose she's trailing him all over the place."

As Mrs. Wright had no expectation of her niece's early arrival, Eliza looked out with indifference from under her closely tied shade hat at the fair girl in neat tailor gown who stood by Edgar as the boat pulled in; and the exclamation of her companions was her first intimation that it was Violet Manning.

Eliza stood quietly amid the greeting and laughing and explanations of the young people, and was introduced to Miss Manning; then she caught sight of Jane Foster, for whose eagerly expected face Phil had been gazing over the heads of everybody, notwithstanding that he had no idea what she looked like.

"Better go home with the Fabians and come to us later," she suggested, speaking low to him.

"Guess again, Eliza," he returned softly. Then he turned to Kathleen. "I'll not interrupt your first *tête-à-tête* with your brother. I'll walk up the hill with Miss Manning and see Mrs. Wright's face when we appear."

Kathleen nodded her agreement, and when



### *The Singer*

they all reached the road, she opened her eyes at the manner in which her brother parted from Violet. Neither spoke. They clasped hands and exchanged a look, which was, to say the least, unusual.

"You and Miss Manning seemed to be giving each other the grip," she laughed when the two began their ascent slowly. "Do you belong to the same secret society?"

His reply was still more amazing. "We do," he answered impressively. "You guessed right the very first time. That girl has more sense in a minute than the general run have in years."

"I always liked her," returned Kathleen, wondering.

As for Philip, he carried Violet's suitcase and Miss Foster's bag and received the jubilant chatter of the young girl with appreciative assent, casting sheep's eyes all the way up the hill at the modest owner of the chicken-house, who little suspected that the big handsome young man who was carrying her bag cared more to get one monosyllable from her than for all the pleasant things this pretty girl might say to him.

Mrs. Wright, busy taking Eliza's place in the

### *The Inner Flame*

preparations for the early dinner, was not watching for the arrival, and the first warning she had of Violet's presence was two vigorous arms being thrown around her neck.

Her first impression was that Jane Foster had an attack of emotional insanity, but in a moment she was returning the embrace.

"My little girl, what does this mean?" she cried joyously. "Not a flower in your room. Nothing ready."

"Yes, dinner is. I can smell it. Oh, Aunt Amy, *you* and vacation, and no city and no heat, and the divine island smell, and twenty-four hours in the day, and seven days in the week. Oh, it's too much happiness!" And Violet danced back into the living-room straight into the arms of Mr. Wright, who had just been washing his hands for dinner.

"Right you are, Violet. No place like the island," he said heartily, while Eliza and Jane Foster regarded the newcomer with calm wonder. How could they know the glamour that was gilding all?

Phil was so preoccupied, he scarcely noticed the girl's antics. His eyes were fixed with the most lover-like eagerness on Jane Foster's serious countenance.



### *The Singer*

"Had you better ask her or I, Eliza?" he murmured, under cover of Violet's laughter.

"You'd better not trust me," replied Eliza darkly, upon which Phil interrupted Miss Foster as she was starting for the stairs.

"Might I speak to you one moment before you go up?" he asked.

Her calm eyes turned to him. "You want board?" she asked.

"No — not exactly. Would you mind coming outside a minute. I'd like to see you alone."

Jane Foster looked into the brilliant face, wondering; then she followed him outside the door. Perhaps he wanted to buy the farmhouse. She had made some calculation before she reached the rustic bench; but his first words dashed her expectations.

"Miss Foster, I'm an artist and like them all, at first, I have n't any money. I've been wondering if you'd let me camp down in your chicken-house and do some work. What rent would you want?"

Jane Foster regarded him calmly. "'T ain't habitable," she said.

"I'll make it so," he returned forcefully.

"I can't imagine —" she began slowly.

"You don't have to," he interrupted ar-

## *The Inner Flame*

dently. "Imagining is my business." He beamed upon her with a smile that warmed her through and through from the chill of the boat. "If you have n't any other use for it just now —"

"Oh, 't ain't any use," she said slowly.

"Then I may?" Phil embarrassed Miss Foster terribly by seizing her hand.

Violet observed them from a window. "Is Mr. Sidney proposing to Miss Foster?" she laughed, turning to Eliza.

"Yes, he is, exactly," returned the latter, hanging up her shade hat.

"Well, I can't imagine any one refusing him," said Violet.

"I only hope she will," muttered Eliza; but the devout words were scarcely out of her lips when Phil came into the room like a cyclone and she was seized and swung up till her respectable head nearly grazed the ceiling.

"It's mine," he cried. "Hurray!" and went out of the house again and across the field toward the boulder cottage.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE NEW STUDIO

IN spite of the incense Edgar had been receiving, he was still a somewhat chastened being; and he had no disagreeable remarks to make about Phil when Mrs. Fabian wondered why he stayed so long at the Wright cottage. He objected to the fact somewhat on his own account. No doubt Violet was entertaining Philip. She had the artistic soul and Phil was horribly good-looking. It was a soothing thought that he was practically penniless and that he must soon return to his labors in New York.

"How long are you expecting Phil to stay here?" he asked his mother after a glance or two across the empty field.

"He says only a week," replied Mrs. Fabian, "but I hope to make it at least two. He's daft about the island."

"But he could n't work here," said Edgar with conviction. "You've no place for oil and turpentine and splotches generally."

"That's what he says," sighed Mrs. Fabian.

### *The Inner Flame*

"I told him this morning we'd give up the summer-house to him."

Edgar faced her. "Where do I come in?" he asked. "I expect the summer-house to save your lives from me. I don't believe we can have two artists in the family."

Kathleen caught the last words as she came downstairs. "Don't worry," she said lightly. "Phil will have none of us. He wants either a ten-acre lot or a stable."

"Well, where is he?" asked Edgar, with some irritation. "I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"And we have Aunt Mary's pretty things. Eliza gave them to mother."

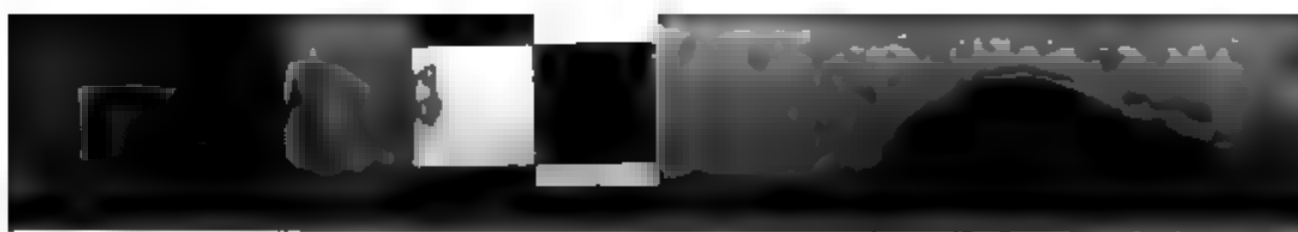
"You don't say so! Well, the Angel of Peace has moulted a feather on this island. There, I see Phil now, loping across the field. Do order dinner to be served, mother."

The music-box was playing when the guest entered.

"Oh, am I late?" he cried contritely, and took the stairs in three bounds.

"How burned he is already!" laughed Mrs. Fabian. "You will be looking like that in a few days, Edgar."

The latter was standing, high-chested and with repressed impatience, in an attitude his



### *The New Studio*

mother knew. He had not at all liked the radiance of Phil's countenance as the latter burst into the room.

"This dinner is especially ordered for you, dear," said Mrs. Fabian soothingly, "from the clam soup to the strawberry shortcake."

"When am I going to have any of it?" inquired Edgar. "Is it worth while to be formal here?"

"Oh, he'll be down in one minute," said Kathleen; and indeed Philip soon appeared and they all seated themselves.

"Last offence, really," said the guest gaily, "but one must be granted a little extra license when he's proposing."

The waitress had placed the filled soup-plates before the family sat down; and Edgar promptly choked on his first mouthful. Violet had told him of meeting Phil in Gramercy Park. Where else and how often had the perfidious girl been with him?

Kathleen swallowed her spoonful of soup, but it was not hot enough to account for the strange burning heat which suddenly travelled down her spine.

Mrs. Fabian alone looked up. "Don't take our breath away like that," she protested,



## *The Inner Flame*

"Who is the woman? Violet Manning or Eliza Brewster?"

"I dreamed of her all last night," returned Phil, eating hungrily. "I knew she was coming, and I could hardly wait to learn my fate. Did n't you notice that I merely played with my breakfast this morning?"

"You ate like a hunter. Did n't he, Kathleen?"

Phil laughed and raised his happy eyes to his hostess.

"Well, you'd save a whole lot of dinner this noon, only that she said 'Yes.'"

There was a miniature storm of hurt vanity in Edgar Fabian's breast. That was the way with these "lookers." Let them have scarce the price of a laundry bill, yet a girl could n't resist them; and that gaze of almost awed admiration in Violet's eyes yesterday. It had meant nothing then but a tribute to genius. Phil should not have that look at his table daily! Edgar would n't stand it. He would match his singing against the other's painting, and time would show if Philip Sidney would have a walk-away. She could n't be happy with a pauper like that, and she should be saved.

As for Kathleen, she could not stop to criti-



### *The New Studio*

cize Philip's blunt announcement. Whether he were jesting or in earnest his sudden words had flashed an awful light upon her own sentiments.

"There's no depth to it," she thought now in defence of her pain. "I know in time."

"Tell us more this minute," said Mrs. Fabian, "and stop eating, you unromantic creature! I did n't even suspect that you knew Violet Manning well. You sly-boots. I'm offended with you."

"The lovely Violet!" exclaimed Phil, "I left her having an attack of emotional insanity over there."

He looked up and met a gaze from Edgar, suggestive of locking horns; and remembered Gramercy Park, and Violet's sudden dignity.

"But not on my account," he went on easily. "My inamorata's name is Jane!" He cast his eyes adoringly ceilingward. "Dear little name! Quaint little name! Jane!"

The relaxation that travelled throughout Kathleen's limbs was as painful and as exasperating as the burn had been. Her eyes were fixed on her soup-plate, and she smiled.

Edgar's teeth shone with the utmost glee. Phil was n't such a bad sort after all. He regarded him with interest, waiting for the sequel.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Philip Sidney, don't be idiotic," said Mrs. Fabian. "My soup is getting cold waiting for you to explain yourself."

"Why, Jane Foster came this morning, mother," said Kathleen. "I'll help you out."

"And I can really only stay with you a week, Aunt Isabel," added Phil.

"She has taken you for a boarder? And all this fuss is about that?" asked Mrs. Fabian. "I should scarcely have thought you'd be so crazy to change my house for hers."

"I know how Phil feels," said Edgar benevolently. "He wants to feel free to make smudges."

"I do, Edgar, mind-reader that you are. Listen, then, all of you. I proposed to Jane that she let me use her chicken-house, and Jane, blessings on her, said the one little word to make me a happy man."

Phil's radiant gaze was bent now upon Kathleen, who met it and nodded. "Just the thing!" she said, and her mother and brother started in on a Babel of tongues. Mrs. Fabian had forgotten the chicken-house. She had not been in that field for years; but Edgar approved, and altogether they joined in Phil's jubilation, and Mrs. Fabian related how she had prepared Pat to pack for just such an exigency.

## *The New Studio*

"The little house is awfully dilapidated," said Kathleen. "Its piazza has fallen off; and I'm sure it leaks. But perhaps you can make it fit to hold your paraphernalia."

"Aunt Isabel, I want you and Kathleen to keep away until I'm in order," said Phil impressively. "You'd try to discourage me and that would waste your time. Eliza is almost in tears, but I know what I want and what I can do."

"A chicken-house!" exclaimed Mrs. Fabian, with second thoughts of disgust.

"Yes, nobody can come near but Edgar; and if he does, he'll have to scrub."

"Thank you very much," and the young man raised his eyebrows: "I have my own work to do, you may remember." Scrubbing chicken-houses he thought might even eclipse the memory of lighting the oil-stove.

"Of course," returned Phil, all attention. "I'm extremely interested in this determination of yours. You certainly have the goods."

"So they tell me," said Edgar, and twisted his mustache.

"What are you going to do for furniture?" asked Mrs. Fabian. "You must at least have some chairs and a table."

## *The Inner Flame*

“And a lounge!” cried Phil, — “and an oil-stove.” He laughed toward Edgar. “I’m going to live there, best of aunts, and maybe take my dinners with Jane, the star of my existence!”

“Phil, you’re crazy,” said Mrs. Fabian, despairing. “You will continue to live here and work over there.”

He shook his head gaily. “Don’t worry. Just watch; and if you have any attic treasures in the way of furniture, let me store them for you.”

When Mrs. Fabian really understood the enterprise Phil was embarking upon, she resigned herself, and finding an old suit of Mr. Fabian’s which he had used for fishing, she bestowed it upon her guest.

Then the work commenced. Eliza tried with a lofty sense of devotion to lend a hand and even besought the privilege; but she was repulsed. Philip induced Captain James to take an interest in his scheme and render him assistance at certain epochs in the reconstruction period, but the Captain and Jane Foster were the only persons privileged to come near the scene of operations; and Miss Foster’s heart so far went out to her strong, determined young tenant that she began hunting in her own garret for things to help him along.



### *The New Studio*

With shovel and wheelbarrow, scrubbing-brushes, soapsuds, disinfectants, hammer and nails, Phil went to work.

Eliza stood on her boundary line, her hands on her hips, and watched, her long nose lifted, while loads of refuse and débris were patiently wheeled down to the edge of the bank and given over to the cleansing tide.

Violet generously offered her window which gave upon the scene of operations, and the opera-glass with which she watched birds; but Eliza declined.

"I won't spy on him," she said, adding vindictively, "but I'll look — the obstinate boy!"

The first time Kathleen called, Violet took her up to her room and they sat in the open window.

"The opera-glass is scarcely any use," she explained, "for he has n't washed the windows yet and you can't see in at all."

Kathleen laughed, but shrank back. "I don't want him to think we're watching," she replied.

"Oh, he knows we all are; but even after he has gone at night, we don't dare to go and look in. We can't pass that rock there — not even Eliza."

A charming tenor voice suddenly sounded on

## *The Inner Flame*

the air, singing an aria from "La Bohème." The girls looked and saw Edgar advancing toward the chicken-house, peering in curiously.

Suddenly, Phil, attired in a sweater and Mr. Fabian's trousers which scarcely reached his ankles, dashed out at the caller and pressed a scrubbing-brush on his acceptance. Edgar suddenly stopped his lay and ran, laughing, toward Mrs. Wright's, where he found the girls and took them out on the water.

"I should think you'd want to help him," said Kathleen wistfully.

"I do," replied Edgar, "but I restrain myself. Phil does n't want me, really," he added; and he was certainly right. Phil had no time to stumble over Marcellines.

A week passed. Jane Foster had been smiling and important for the last few days, but not for kingdoms would Eliza have questioned her. She had acquired an air of calm indifference, which belied the burning curiosity within. When Phil stopped in passing to speak with her, she talked of the weather. Mrs. Wright, on the contrary, expressed her eagerness to see what was going on so near and yet so far from them.

"Pluto gets ahead of us," she said, "and



### *The New Studio*

you've trained him so well he never tells anything."

Edgar happened to be present and he shrugged his shoulders. "Better hurry up, Phil," he remarked, "and have your opening before interest wanes. You'll have an anti-climax the first thing you know."

Mrs. Wright turned the gentle radiance of her eyes on the speaker.

"We heard you last night, singing as you went home, Mr. Fabian," she said: "that lovely voice floating across the field will make us famous. People will hear it and wonder about the source, and begin to talk of the angel of Brewster's Island."

"Wonderfully level-headed people, those Wrights," soliloquized Edgar, as he sauntered home. "A distinct acquisition to the island." Some thought occurred to him. "I wish father could have heard that," he mused.

Phil lingered behind him. He had changed into his own clothes remarkably early this afternoon. There was an hour yet before supper-time.

"Where are the rest of your family this afternoon?" he asked.

"Violet went with Kathleen into the woods to



## *The Inner Flame*

get some specimens she wants for her microscope," replied Mrs. Wright.

"Where's Eliza?" Phil smiled as he asked it, and his companion smiled in answer.

"In her room, I think."

Phil raised his eyebrows interrogatively.

"Yes, I think so, a little," she replied softly, nodding. "You see Jane has been there every day."

"But that's all the rent I pay," protested Phil, all very quietly, for though they were standing outdoors, the windows were open.

"Yes, but — it's a good deal for flesh and blood to bear," said Mrs. Wright with a twinkling glance. "The green-eyed monster ramps at the best of us, you know."

"I wonder if I could see Eliza," said Phil in his natural voice.

"Yes, I think she's in her room," returned Mrs. Wright. "I'll go and see."

She disappeared, and Phil's eyes roved to the boulder cottage and fixed there. A smile touched the corners of his lips. He had not meant to carry prohibition too far with Eliza. It was genuine desire to save her trouble as well as the wish to surprise her after her vehement opposition to his scheme, which had made him

### *The New Studio*

warn her away. Now he was eager to make it right with her.

"I remember now," said Mrs. Wright, returning; "Eliza went down the hill this afternoon. I don't know just when she'll come back; but won't you sit down and wait for her?"

"Thank you, I don't believe I will. I'll come back later. I've been a runaway guest all this week," and with a smile of farewell, an eager look grew in Phil's eyes as he started to run across the field toward home.

In all his arrangements, each time he had gained an effect he had thought of Kathleen's amusement and appreciation.

As soon as he found that Eliza was out of the question, his eagerness burst forth to get the girls' point of view. He met Violet Manning returning from the woods escorted by Edgar.

"I open the studio to-morrow," he cried gaily. "Will you come to my tea at three-thirty?"

"Will we!" exclaimed Violet. "We could n't have lasted much longer! I'm glad you let us see it 'before' so we can fully appreciate it 'after.'"

Violet was looking pretty and very happy. Phil considered for one moment whether he

## *The Inner Flame*

should ask her to pour. Even yet he felt that Kathleen lived in a remote rarefied air of elegance. Would one dare ask her to dispense tea in a chicken-house? But he wisely kept silence. Aunt Isabel might yet enter into what she continued to term his foolishness.

With a wave of his hand, he fled on his way, and found Kathleen, flushed from her walk, carrying mosses to the table in the wind-break.

"I've finished," he cried, vaulting over the railing and appearing beside her. "Want to see it?"

She looked up into his expectant eyes.

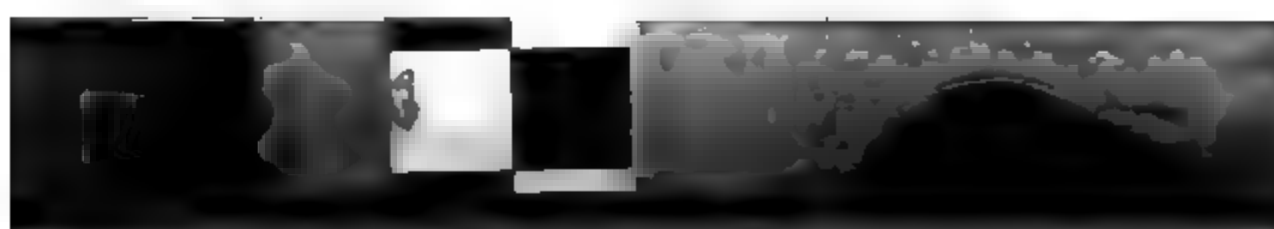
"Are we invited?" she returned.

"To-morrow, everybody is; but I thought I'd like you to see it right now — if you are n't too tired."

"A private view!" she exclaimed. "Who was ever too tired for that? But I'm of the earth so earthy, I shall have to go in and wash my hands."

"No, no, don't," replied Phil softly. "You'd meet Aunt Isabel, and this is to be clandestine. Wipe your hands on this," — he pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket, — "and come."

Kathleen laughed and brushing her fingers



### *The New Studio*

free of traces of the treasured moss, she wiped them and they started across the field.

"Here's hoping Violet and Edgar don't see us," said Phil, and took the path he had trodden so often straight to the hen-house, and which did not pass very near the Wrights.

As they approached, Kathleen looked curiously at the little cottage with its sloping red roof, nestling close to the ground on the breast of the hill and sheltered by the tall Balm-of-Gilead trees. Their rustling leaves held always a murmur as of rain and to-day fleecy white clouds piled against the blue sky behind the cottage.

As they drew near, Kathleen stopped and clasped her hands, and laughter bubbled from her lips.

"That's clever!" she exclaimed heartily, and Phil's eyes danced as she met them.

A swinging sign had been hung above the low door. Upon it strutted a splendid cock and above his proudly lifted comb appeared the legend:—

#### VILLA CHANTECLER.

Phil threw open the low door with a sweeping bow; and Kathleen paused on the threshold

## *The Inner Flame*

with a low cry of surprise; then stepped into the cool, dusky interior.

She found herself in a low-ceiled room with small-paned windows set high. A golden radiance streamed through, falling on the soft tone of floor and walls.

On a table draped with dull green a tall candlestick and ivory-tinted plate reflected gleams of light.

Kathleen sank on the cushions of a long, low divan.

"You can paint Rembrandt portraits in here!" she said. "Don't explain how you've done it. I don't want to know. It is the most restful, delightful studio I've ever seen — and smelling of ambergris?"

"No, only of bay leaves."

Phil waited and let her look at the hangings, the cushioned chairs, and spindle legs of the quaint table.

"You like it," he said after a pause of deep satisfaction.

She looked up at him. "I am making genuflexions to you in my mind."

He laughed. "But the best is yet to come. Sit where you are."

He moved to the back of the room and opened



### *The New Studio*

a door toward the ocean. It was as if a brilliant panel had suddenly been set in the dark wall.

Kathleen sprang to her feet.

"Like enamel!" she said softly, and approached the opening.

It led upon a terrace with a white railing. Tall white pillars at either end were crowned with dark-green bay.

"Is it a stage-setting," she said, "or is it practicable?"

"Come out and see."

Together they moved outside and the wind came up out of the sea across the sleeping field and swept their faces and set the young leaves of the orchard to whispering with sweet fresh lips to their gnarled stems.

Kathleen looked up at her companion, smiled and shook her head.

"You have added poetry to our island," she said. "I did n't think any one could do that."

Phil met her gaze.

"And you," he said, "have put the finishing touch to my satisfaction."



## CHAPTER XXIII

### PHILIP'S LETTER

DEAREST MOTHER: — You remember I told you I had found a pig's ear and was going to make a silk purse out of it despite the scepticism of the neighborhood. Behold the purse! I call it the Villa Chantecler. It has taken me the whole week, but the result — well, Kathleen says I have added poetry to the island, and I suspect she is authority on poetry, although that too is hidden in one of the locked rooms I've told you about. She gives just enough of herself to each person to fit every occasion; but the way she took the first view of the Villa yesterday was like everything else she does; perfection. I did n't know I was going to write that. I did n't know I thought it. That's the beauty of having some one to whom you can think aloud. You find out what you do think; but she and I touch only on the high places and when we leave the island we shall fly apart for the whole winter again; with pleasant memories, however. She has a positive talent for letting people alone. I love such people!



### *Philip's Letter*

Now, to tell you how I did my little trick. I could never have done it but for New England tenacity and thrift. They never throw anything away in this part of the world; and even importations like Aunt Isabel collect some lumber-room outcasts rather than injure the scenery by throwing them over the bank.

Jane Foster, adorable landlady and Lady Bountiful that she is, turned me loose in her attic, and told me to help myself. So, first of all, I made the hen-house shine with cleanliness. Then Cap'n James helped me drag up its dejected piazza which had capsized in the neighboring field. We nailed it to the house and painted it white.

Aunt Isabel had discarded a Crex rug, which I took for my studio, also a three-legged divan and chairs whose cane seats had surrendered. These I mended and cushioned. In Miss Foster's attic, I found what I should think were all the potato sacks that had ever been used in the Foster family. These made my hangings and cushions, although the poverty they implied nearly reduced Jane to tears. She implored me to use turkey red and found enough in the attic to begin on. The stuff smelled so new, I'm



## *The Inner Flame*

nearly certain the dear woman bought it and placed it there.

I found an old spinet under the eaves. Its voice had long departed; but its charming legs and framework were intact. I placed some boards across that and used my green bathrobe for a cover. I took a straight length of pipe, fixed it into a wooden stand, topped it with a spool, bronzed the whole thing, and behold, a stunning candlestick in which stands a tall wax candle.

Among the refuse I had carried out of the place, I had found charming old plates, heavy as lead, crackled with age, and cream and gray in color. These I disposed variously, and I am perfectly sure Cap'n James and Jane Foster have laid their heads together in order to condole over the fact that so pleasant a young man should have so gloomy and unpicturesque a taste when he expects to get his living by that same lame faculty. In fact, Cap'n James unburdened his mind one day. He said:—

“Ain't you goin' to have anything cheerful 'round here? It looks to me more fit for hens than it does for folks right now.”

Under the house I found lengths of drain-pipe. These I used on my terrace at the back



### *Philip's Letter*

of the Villa, overlooking the sea. When I had placed these pillars at each end of the railing and crowned them with the polished bay that grows luxuriantly here, I had a quite Italian effect, I assure you.

Jane looks at me with pitiful eyes, and yesterday came down to the Villa with a framed chromo from her parlor wall.

"I just as lieves you'd use it as not," she said, "and anyway you might put it up till the folks have seen the place. Your own paintin's can go up later." I almost kissed her, she pitied me so, and I could see that she agreed with Cap'n James, who said the place gave him the "Injun blues."

There is a rough stairway that leads to the half-floored room above. I took a drain-pipe to make a newel post for that. It is surmounted with a bronze Mercury on a pedestal. The pedestal is a small, rusty tin wash-basin that I found under the house. I covered it with varnish and rolled it in sand, inverted it, and behold! I also gave an appearance of advanced age to the Mercury; so the general appearance is as of a treasure from Pompeii.

If only you and father could see and feel the beauty and the heavenly quiet of the place. I

### *The Inner Flame*

have a kitchen, too. The door was a wreck, and I tacked upon it a dark ornate window shade which tones in with all the rest.

Sometimes I feel as if I were only living to see you again. I know it 's what I'm working for anyway; and I well know that you are working for me every day of your dear life.

I love you.

PHIL.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### PHILIP ENTERTAINS

PHILIP still had Eliza on his mind, so when Kathleen had left him, he went back to the farmhouse and had the good fortune to meet Eliza returning home.

"I'm looking for you!" he called cheerfully.

She regarded him unsmiling. "Well," she remarked carelessly, "you look like a gentleman of leisure."

"Just what I am. You guessed right. My Villa is finished and I've been waiting for you because I'm going to let everybody in to-morrow and I wanted you to see it with me alone."

"My opinion ain't worth anything," said Eliza; "besides, it's pretty near time to get supper. Miss Foster went up to Portland to-day."

"I know she did. That's why I'm in a hurry to take you into the studio before the boat arrives. You know how discouraging you were, Eliza, and I wanted to surprise you. I'd have liked to surprise everybody, but, of course, I

### *The Inner Flame*

had n't the nerve to keep Miss Foster out. The rent I pay did n't warrant it." The speaker twinkled down into Eliza's unresponsive eyes. "I'm going to give a tea to-morrow and I want to talk it over with you."

They had strolled near to the rustic bench where Mrs. Wright was still sitting with her work.

"Eliza is going with me to have a private view of the Villa," said Phil. "Your turn to-morrow. I'm going to give a tea. Will you come?"

"Most assuredly," answered Mrs. Wright. "As soon as you cleaned those windows, my curiosity began to effervesce."

"I can't go now," said Eliza. "I've waited this long, I guess I can wait till to-morrow. I've got to get supper."

Philip threw an arm around her and drew her forward.

"Boarders have come, Mr. Philip," she exclaimed. "They'll see you."

"I hope they will," he responded firmly. "If they don't know I love you, it's the best way to tell them."

Eliza walked along stiffly, perforce, toward the forbidden ground.



### *Philip Entertains*

"Yes, I thought I'd make a grand splurge tomorrow, and give a tea," he continued. "I want you to preside."

"Do what?"

"Pour. I want you to pour for me."

"H'm. Ridiculous! Let one of the girls do it."

"Well, just as you say. Now, then," they were drawing near the little house, "prepare! Be a good sport now, and own yourself wrong if you think you are. See my shingle?"

Eliza's eyes followed his gesture and caught sight of the crowing cock.

"H'm," she said; then they went inside.

Eliza looked about in silence for a minute.

"It's clean," she said at last; and Phil knew she was moved to catch at a word of praise as one says of a neighbor's plain and uninteresting baby, "How healthy he looks!"

He began explaining his devices to Eliza and her heart was touched by his joy in all this cheap gloom.

By the time he opened the back door, she was ready to weep over him; and she said:—

"That's a real sightly piazza."

Then they moved into the little kitchen.

"I've been waiting for you to tell me what to do here," said the artist, and Eliza rose to the

## *The Inner Flame*

bait and began pulling things about and showing him where shelves must be placed.

"How are you goin' to give a tea," she asked, "with one broken mug?"

"Borrow cups and saucers from Aunt Isabel. That's easy; but," he looked down at Eliza, whose face had regained its usual alertness, "it occurred to me that perhaps I have some of my own — those that you packed for me and that ran away to the island."

"Mr. Philip, I'm a fool to forget those!" responded the other, after gazing at him in silence. "You shall have every one of 'em. They're all mixed in with the Foster things. I'll pick 'em out; and we'll lend you all you need beside."

"Would it interfere with supper proceedings if we were to do it right now?"

"Law! it ain't time to get supper yet," responded Eliza, so promptly that, as they hurried out of the door, Phil stooped to break a long blade of grass to bite.

A vigorous search was at once instituted for the china, and Phil and Eliza carried it down to the studio; and as they went, Mr. Wright came up from the water and joined his wife.

"We're to be let in to-morrow," she said. "He has finished."



### *Philip Entertains*

"Well, it's been a job," remarked Mr. Wright, who had occasionally sat on a log and watched Phil at his roof-mending or some other strenuous part of the work.

"Yes, he ought to succeed," said Mrs. Wright. "He has n't a lazy bone in his body."

"There are n't many of us that have at his age," remarked Mr. Wright. "Are there, Pluto?"

The cat had run to meet him like a dog. For him the scent of Mr. Wright's fishing trousers was as the perfume of Araby; and he followed him to the room in the shed where his friend changed them for habiliments more generally agreeable.

At last Phil returned to the boulder cottage where he found Mrs. Fabian and Kathleen in the wind-break. The latter was working at the table, sorting the moss specimens for her slides.

She looked up at him now with a new realization of his powers.

"Well, you said this morning to-day would finish the work," said Mrs. Fabian, closing her novel on her finger for a mark. "Are you through?"

"As nearly as I ever shall be," he replied, throwing himself into a chair near Kathleen's



## *The Inner Flame*

table and regarding her deft fingers at their work.

"Well, I'm glad," said Mrs. Fabian, "for we've seen nothing of you. I like the way you visit us."

He looked at her quickly to see if there were feeling behind the accusation.

"Now, you'll have to stay on a week when you are not so preoccupied."

"Not if he does n't wish to, mother," said Kathleen, going on with her work. Her cheeks were still flushed from the warm tramp to the woods; the red glints in her hair shone lustrous.

"It does look like making use of you, does n't it?" he said impetuously. "But you're so good to me, both of you. To-morrow you'll forgive me, Aunt Isabel, when you see I have a place to work and trouble no one. I do hope it won't rain."

"Oh, no," said Kathleen, handling a tiny bit of moss. "The moon holds the weather."

Mrs. Fabian laughed. "Kathleen, the astronomer," she said.

The girl nodded. "It may not be a scientific way to put it, but I've always noticed it here. It will be full to-morrow night. The weather won't change till the moon does."



### *Philip Entertains*

"Delightfully consoling," said Phil, continuing to watch her averted face. It seemed to him this was the first time since Christmas night that his mind had been sufficiently at leisure from itself to concentrate upon her. He suddenly remembered that she used to like cigarettes. He had not yet seen her use one. Perhaps she was aiding Edgar in the stern limit which he was imposing upon himself.

"I wonder," he said, "if either of you would pour for me at my grand tea to-morrow."

Kathleen did not look up, but her cheeks grew warmer while she manipulated the moss.

"Oh, a tea in the chicken-house," laughed Mrs. Fabian.

The light jeering tone struck Kathleen as coming at a particularly unfortunate moment.

"I will. Be glad to," she said heartily.

"Whom are you going to invite? The fish?" laughed Mrs. Fabian.

Phil's naïveté was dashed by her tone. Kathleen felt it.

"Mother's jealous, Phil," she said, "because she has seen so little of you all the week. She is at fever heat of curiosity as to what you have been doing; and as for tea! Mother's an inebriate. She won't leave any for the fish. You'll see."

## *The Inner Flame*

Phil looked at the speaker gratefully, and leaned toward her a little. "I have the right barrel at last," he said. "The one that ran away to the island. Do you remember?"

His eyes were so very speaking that Kathleen dropped hers to the moss. She nodded and smiled.

"It knew where it ought to go, did n't it?" she returned.

Mrs. Fabian's countenance had sobered. She knew the descendant of the Van Ruyslers so well that she understood that she had offended.

"Can't one make a bit of fun once in a while?" she asked in injured tones of Kathleen when next they were alone.

"Yes, once in a while," answered the girl, and kissed her.

"It'll be something funny for you to look back upon when you come out, Kathleen, that your first function after graduating took place in a chicken-house."

"I hope I shall not be homesick for it," thought the girl; but she only smiled.

"Kathleen is certainly touchy about Phil," mused Mrs. Fabian. "She glared up at me just the way she did last fall when I wanted to get Aunt Mary's silver. She is the queerest girl!"

### *Philip Entertains*

The moon or something else did hold the weather and the artist could have had no better day on which to give his proof that where there's a will there's a way.

The company swarmed through the little house, laughing, admiring, questioning. At last they stood on the terrace.

"My dear boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Wright. "You could have no better view if you were a millionaire!"

"The only thing lacking," cried Violet, "is a white peacock. Where is the white peacock?"

"How about it, Edgar?" asked Phil. "Could n't you stand out there for the lady?"

"The nightingale could never deceive us," said Mrs. Wright, bending her universally loving gaze on Edgar, whose chin was held rather higher than usual.

"That's so," cried Phil. "Sing us something, Edgar, right here and now."

"Certainly," responded the gifted one, regarding his host as he launched easily into song:—

"'I'm looking for a lobster and I think you'll do.'"

Mrs. Fabian did not join in the laugh. She had moved inside, and her lorgnette was fixed on a closed door.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I must see in there, Phil," she said.

"Of course, you must, Mrs. Bluebeard," he replied. "You may all go in this once, but it's the last time ever, I warn you, for that is my kitchen."

They swarmed through to the little room, where Edgar perceived with a groan an oil-stove burning cosily in the midst of canvas, paints, easel, et cetera.

"*I'll* never go in again, I promise you," he declared.

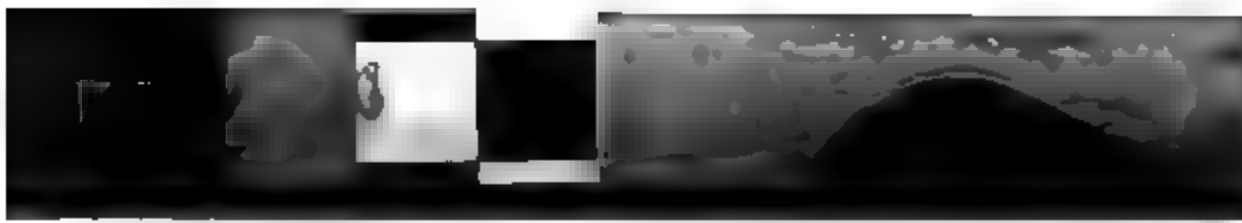
At the host's invitation, the company arranged themselves on the rejuvenated chairs and couch, and Kathleen made tea at the spindle-legged table.

Mrs. Fabian's lorgnette was bent upon the newel post.

"However did you make him stand up, dear?" she asked, regarding the Mercury which had winged his way from her garret. "We have n't been upstairs yet, remember."

"And you won't go till you're tired of life," returned the host. "It abounds in trapdoors and, aside from my affection for you, the furniture down here could n't stand being fallen on."

Being turned ceilingward, Mrs. Fabian's lorgnette discovered that branches of bay had



### *Philip Entertains*

been woven through the rafters in some places. She shrugged her shoulders.

"You'll get rained on in this dilapidated old place," she said. "A few bay leaves can't deceive me."

"Madam! Are you aware that you are talking about the Villa Chantecler? That roof is as tight as a drum."

Mrs. Fabian stirred the lemon in her substantially thick cup; and looked admiringly at the energetic host.

"I only hope, Phil," she sighed, "that you are n't too practical to succeed in your profession. So few artists would know how to mend a roof or even remember the necessity for it. I hope it is n't a bad sign."

Edgar, sitting with Violet on the railing, drinking tea, heard his mother's comment.

"A good deal in that, I think," he remarked softly. "I've never seen any of Phil's things except that rough black-and-white stuff he has in there. He never seemed to me to have a particle of temperament."

Violet was inclined to agree. She had seen nothing amusing in Philip's chaff about the peacock. She thought it quite as silly as were the other comments on the robin.

### *The Inner Flame*

"I wish you would sing something," she said. "Do, and surprise them."

"I can't. I have n't even a banjo."

"I've noticed you have everything over at the house: banjo, guitar, mandolin, everything. You must leave one of them over here. Music would sound perfectly charming in this place."

"*Any* music?" asked Edgar, smiling.

She returned his look from the tops of her eyes. "Bold fisherman," she replied.

Her companion scanned the horizon: "The moon is going to be great to-night. It looks as if it would rise clear out of the water. Want to go for a sail?"

"I don't believe I can," replied Violet. "I have an engagement."

"An engagement!" returned Edgar, sceptically. "Are you going to read aloud to your aunt?"

Violet smiled at him provokingly. "You're not the only man on this island," she remarked.

A quick flush mounted to Edgar's forehead.

"Phil?" he asked quickly.

She nodded, mutely, and took the last swallow of her tea.

Her companion looked as if he might be in the throes of the red mood.



### *Philip Entertains*

"That's beastly," he said, dismayed to think that in all Phil's preoccupation he had had sufficient forethought to secure Violet for this perfect evening. "Since when?" he demanded fiercely.

"Since yesterday," she returned demurely, apparently unconscious that the arrangement caused annoyance.

"Very well, then, we'll take the yacht," he said, "and let the crowd go. Phil can help me sail her. I was intending to take the motor-boat and you alone."

"I don't know whether Mr. Sidney would care to," she returned coolly, "but it's very kind of you."

Edgar regarded her, baffled. "What — what had you planned to do?" he asked. He knew the question was inexcusable and braced himself for a snub; but the sweet Violet, exultant at his open disturbance, administered none.

"Nothing special," she replied. "Mr. Sidney is invited to dine with us, in celebration of the completion of the improvements he has been making on the estate. That's all."

"Oh, absurd!" declared Edgar. "As if you could n't dine any foggy night. Well, you don't need to stay after dinner. He is n't your guest."



## *The Inner Flame*

Violet regarded him with an ironical smile.

"I've been taught manners," she said. "Beside, perhaps I want to stay. Did n't that occur to you?"

Edgar scowled and looked off on the ocean and back again. "I don't want to take the whole family out in order to get you," he said, fuming.

"I would n't," she answered, laughing. "It is n't worth the trouble."

Her companion clenched his even teeth. He did n't want to risk Philip's meandering about the island alone with Violet on such an evening as this was going to be. He would be sure to talk of his work and his hopes, and her confoundedly soulful eyes would look back at him comprehendingly, and a precedent would be established and —

"You see, Mr. Sidney expects to take all his dinners with us after he begins working here," went on Violet sweetly. "It will be so convenient just to run across."

Edgar gave her a furious glance, but the simplicity of her regard was complete.

Mrs. Wright came to the open door. "We're going now, Violet," she said. "Will you come? Our host positively refuses to allow us to help

### *Philip Entertains*

him put things away, and he will follow a little later. I've been hoping," turning to Edgar, "that you might be moved to sing as you sat out here."

The young man had sprung to his feet and was trying to banish evidences of the red mood from his brow.

"I wanted to take Violet out on the water to-night," he said. "It seems there's an obstacle."

"Yes, a large one," returned Mrs. Wright pleasantly. "Lots of evenings coming, but I don't know about letting my little girl go on the water at night."

"I guarantee her safety. I've come here ever since I was a baby, Mrs. Wright, and I'm an amphibious animal; but if Sidney should ever suggest it, remember he's a landlubber. Half the time they don't know enough to be afraid."

"Very true," returned Mrs. Wright, with her natural graceful sweetness of manner, which at least succeeded in making Edgar feel rude. "Come, dear," turning to Violet, "I'd like to have you come with me."

So the girl rose and yielded her cup to Edgar, who took it with dignity. He, the ex-cavalier of Mrs. Larrabee, not to be able to mould circumstances among these poor and provincial people!

## *The Inner Flame*

He took leave of Philip, and tendered his congratulations with an air fitted to grace marble halls. "I believe," he added, "you don't dine at home to-night."

"No," replied Phil, "Miss Foster is very kindly entertaining her tenant."

Edgar pricked up his ears; and instantly ran after Violet. "Phil says Jane Foster invited him," he said vehemently. "I shall call for you by eight o'clock. I'll take the best care of her, Mrs. Wright. I assure you I will, and bring her in early."

He was off before he could be gainsaid, and Mrs. Wright noticed that Violet's expression was such as might be worn by a well-grown kitten who had been hilariously entertained in a game with a mouse which was as yet unfinished and highly promising.

The events of the week had thrown light on the happiness Violet evinced the day of her arrival under Edgar Fabian's escort. Mrs. Wright's tenderness for her orphan niece was alertly watchful. She put an arm around her now and drew her away from the house, and they walked slowly across the grass.

"It really is perfectly safe to go on the water with Edgar," said the girl, half laughing.



### *Philip Entertains*

"For me, it might be," returned Mrs. Wright quietly.

Violet blushed deeply, and dreaded what might be coming.

"The Fabians are nice people," went on her aunt, "very rich people and able to give you pleasures, and I like you to be friendly with them; but I'm a little afraid of this situation."

"You need n't be," burst forth the girl impulsively. "Edgar does n't really care much about me."

"That's the trouble," said Mrs. Wright quietly.

The reply was so unexpected that Violet felt a sharp twinge of mortification and a spontaneous desire to show her aunt that she was wrong. There were lots of small proofs that she might give her —

"No," she returned, suddenly serious. "He cares very much for me in a certain way: my understanding of his gift — and his hopes — and his career. His family mean to be kind, but they're so unsympathetic. They're not temperamental like him and —"

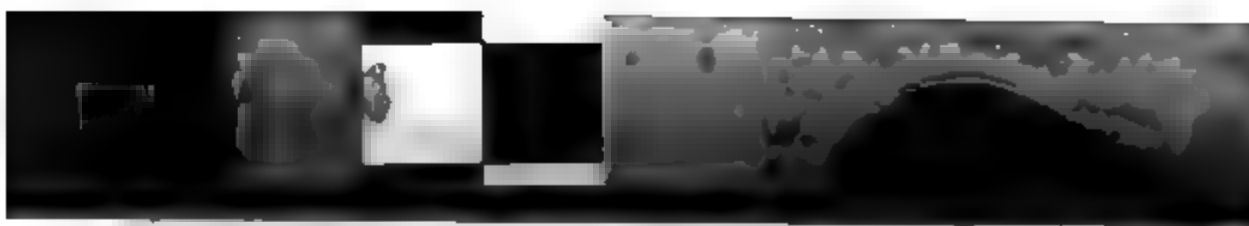
Violet paused because Aunt Amy was smiling. It was unkind to smile at such a time. Very well! Her lips should be sealed from this time

## *The Inner Flame*

on. She would never again speak to her about Edgar!

"He is very attractive even with all his conceit," said Mrs. Wright, who was quite conscious that the girl's slender body had suddenly a resentful rigidity. "A beautiful tenor voice and conceit seem to be inseparable in this mundane sphere; and if my little girl has understood and responded to his outpourings about himself she is charming to him." Mrs. Wright paused and then went on: "Look around, Violet, and realize that you are the only girl here to whom he can show attention. Did he show you any in New York? Did he go out of his way for you? You fell right into his reach on the train and he took the gifts the gods provided; and they were very sweet gifts."

The speaker squeezed her unresponsive listener, whose heart was beating hotly. "As a rule men are marauders," she went on. "As a rule, women are single-hearted, faithful. There are exceptions. I want to give you one piece of advice and I can't put it too strongly. Take it in and act upon it, and it may save you a world of hurt vanity, and possibly a broken heart. No matter how a man behaves toward you, — no matter how he looks, or what he does, — or



### *Philip Entertains*

what he says, — don't believe or even imagine that he loves you until he tells you he does, in so many words."

There were tears in the baby-bachelor's blue eyes. Among the stormy emotions that filled her was the horrible suspicion that, instead of being a foreordained victor, the kitten might possibly in the end be the mouse's victim.

"Now, Mr. Sidney," went on Mrs. Wright's calm voice, "is a man who I believe has hold of life by the right end."

"He is always making fun of Edgar," burst forth Violet, her breath coming fast. "You heard what he said about the peacock."

At this, Mrs. Wright fell a peg lower in her niece's estimation, for she laughed.

"I knew what he meant," she answered, "but I couldn't let the lovely singer's feelings be hurt."

"Knew what he meant!" exclaimed Violet, indignantly, and suddenly breaking away from her aunt's embrace, she ran toward the house and disappeared.

Mrs. Wright followed the fleeing form with her eyes, and nodded gently.

"I thought so. Only just in time," she said to herself. The seed was dropped, and even though

## *The Inner Flame*

the ground did have to be harrowed to get the necessary depth, it was better so.

The evening was as beautiful as Edgar Fabian had foreseen. One of the many charms of Brewster's Island was the habit the wind had of lulling at sunset, often making the evening air milder than that of day.

To-night the sun had sunk in a clear sky behind the White Mountains. All the family at the Wright cottage had come out after supper to see the Presidential Range, ninety miles away, silhouetted black against the golden glory.

"One can breathe here," thought Philip. "One can breathe here." He wondered if Kathleen were watching the sunset.

"Oh, but turn around," cried Violet suddenly. "This is a three-ringed circus. One should live on a pivot here on a clear night."

Phil turned obediently, and saw the waters dashing against a huge disk of pale gold.

Kathleen, lying in her hammock, arm folded beneath her head, was also watching the moon.

Edgar sat near her on the steps, smoking his third cigarette that day. It was his rigid allowance. He saw dimly the figures come out from the Wright cottage and his first impulse was to



### *Philip Entertains*

stroll across and join them; but pride forbade. Supposing he were to get there just in time to see Violet walk off with Philip.

"What a perfect evening!" said Kathleen lazily. "Go in and get the guitar, Edgar, and sing me something."

Sing something! Edgar's teeth clenched at the thought.

"I've practised such a lot to-day, I'm no good," he replied.

"Why, I did n't hear you," she said.

"No. I took my trusty pitch-pipe down in the woods and scared the birds. I have some mercy on you and mother."

"What is your aim?" asked his sister. "What do you want to do? Concert work?"

"Yes, perhaps. Mazzini says I could teach right now if I wanted to."

"Teach?" repeated Kathleen, trying to speak respectfully, but smiling at the man in the moon, who grinned back as if he understood.

"Of course, there's no necessity for that, so I shall simply prepare myself for public work; recitals; possibly go abroad for the prestige of study over there. Not that I need it, but the name goes a long way, and if I should go into opera it is best to begin there."



## *The Inner Flame*

The man in the moon grew redder in the face. So did Kathleen; but she knew that sublime self-assurance is an asset not to be despised. She looked at her brother's trim shapely head, rising from the white silk collar of his negligée shirt.

"Does Mazzini really think you are already prepared to teach?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. I had very few errors in method to unlearn, and he says, given a good voice, a good presence, and good looks, tact, and an attractive studio, pupils will come fast enough," replied Edgar carelessly. "He said he'd send me his overflow; but of course all that was in joke. He knows that it is no question of money with me."

Kathleen ceased to smile at the moon, for her thoughts recurred to their father, meeting his problems in the heat of the great city. So far his letters had breathed no hint of trouble.

"That's a glorious feeling, Edgar," she said soberly, "to feel certain that you can be independent."

"Yes," he returned, speaking low, and holding the cigarette between his fingers. "I said I'd show father, and I will."

The remainder of his thoughts he did not

## *Philip Entertains*

voice; but there was some one else he meant to show. The vivacious Mrs. Larrabee who had dared to use him when it suited her and then discard him with raised eyebrows and a scornful word. She should see him win the plaudits of the multitude; then, when she endeavored to add her incense and claim to have been his inspiration, it should be his turn to show cold disdain. He ground the even teeth at some memory.

"I want to tell you, Edgar," went on Kathleen in the same serious tone, "that I am proud of your determination; proud of your regular work; proud of your cutting down on smoking; and it will overwhelm me with joy to see you succeed."

"Thanks, Kath," he returned. "I appreciate that."

"And I also want to ask you not to make love to Violet Manning," went on the low, serious voice.

Edgar was dumb, and now the man in the moon met *him* with a grin.

"You know it will be only an idle pastime with you, and because she is the only girl here. It might mean a lot to her, and — it's a hard world for girls."

## *The Inner Flame*

Kathleen had not intended to end her appeal in that way, but the declaration broke from her.

"She does n't care a picayune for me," returned Edgar. "Don't you worry." He hoped his sister would contradict him; but she did not.

"You might be able to make her," she said. "Be too manly to try, Edgar. Do, do be unselfish and honest."

The earnest deliberation of her tone caused her listener to reflect for a moment; and the man in the moon, by this time crimson in the face, met his frowning regard mirthfully.



## CHAPTER XXV

### BY MOONLIGHT

WHILE Edgar was still frowning, and divided between consoled pride and a consciousness of guilt, a tall dark form came into sight in the moonlit landscape. It broke into a run as it neared the cottage, and with a sense of relief Edgar recognized Philip Sidney, who bounded over the piazza railing.

Catching sight of Edgar sitting alone, he spoke eagerly: —

“Has Kathleen gone anywhere?”

“No, she’s there in the hammock. How did you break away so early?”

“I did n’t think it was going to be easy,” replied Phil half laughing, and looking toward the shadowy hammock where Kathleen in her white gown was watching him; “but we finished supper a long time ago, and — and have been talking ever since. We had told each other about everything we knew, and so I thought” — his voice trailed away — “well, I think I was homesick.”

## *The Inner Flame*

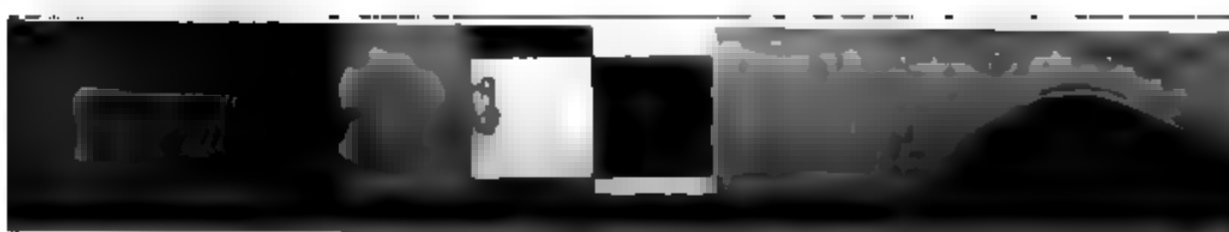
"Why did n't you bring Violet with you?" asked Edgar.

"I tried to; that is, I suggested that it was too heavenly a night to keep still, and asked her if she would like to go to walk —" As he talked, Phil kept his eyes on the white figure in the hammock and he spoke eagerly as if he were justifying himself. "But," he went on, "she said she had a headache and felt that she must excuse herself."

Edgar looked up triumphantly at the man in the moon, but he refused to see the joke. His hilarious mood had changed. He beamed down now in pensive golden serenity with the usual remote benevolence for all lovers which has won his reputation.

"What was there in that tea I made?" inquired Kathleen lazily. "Mother has the headache, too. Is n't it a shame on such an evening."

"Too bad," said Phil perfunctorily. He approached the hammock and neither he nor Kathleen noted that Edgar made an unostentatious departure such as the comic papers describe as a cat-like sneak. Certainly Pluto could not have moved any more quietly, and his heart was gay.



### *By Moonlight*

"Headache!" he thought, the even teeth broadly exhibited. "What that headache needs is the water-cure"; and the boarders sitting out in front of the Wright cottage heard the "Toreador Song" blithely whistled by some one coming across the field.

When Edgar arrived at the farmhouse he looked about for a familiar figure. Among the little group, Eliza Brewster was the only one he knew. He approached her with his most debonair manner.

"Good evening, Eliza. Will you please tell Miss Manning I am here?"

"She's got the headache, Mr. Fabian."

"So Mr. Sidney said; but I thought she might see me for just a minute. I want to tell her something important."

"Well, that's too bad, 'cause she's gone to bed. I'll take any message you want me to, and give it to her in the morning. I'd rather not disturb her now 'cause I just took her up a pitcher o' water and she told me she was goin' to try to go to sleep."

Edgar was so blankly silent that Eliza spoke again.

"I'll call Mrs. Wright if you'd rather see her. She's in her room writin' a letter."

## *The Inner Flame*

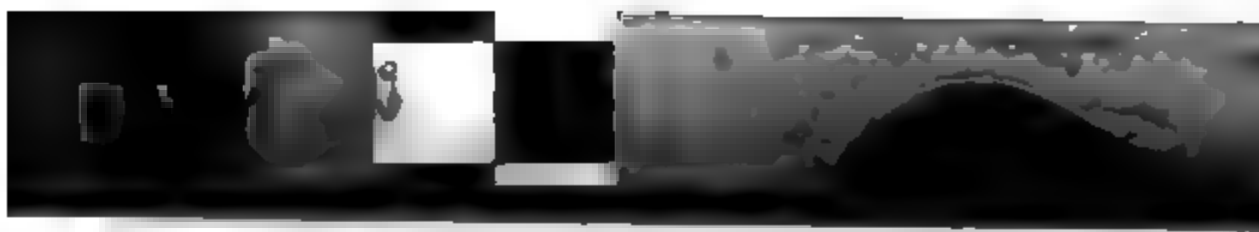
"No, no, don't trouble yourself," said the visitor, lightly. "Good night."

He moved away quickly toward the Villa Chantecler and made a détour around it. The little piazza overlooking the sea gleamed white in the moonlight. The bay leaves stood up crisp and polished. Edgar recalled the mocking in Violet's eyes as they had sat there this afternoon. To lose an evening like this. It was a crime!

Coming out beside the orchard he looked up at the windows of Violet's room. They were dark.

His hopeful vanity relinquished the hope that she had manoeuvred to get rid of Phil in order to leave the coast clear for himself. He moved up the incline and threw himself down in the shadow. He could hear a stir at the front of the house. The lingerers in the moonlight were moving inside and he could see lamps twinkle in rooms where the shades were pulled down.

In a few minutes more all lights vanished. Only the rising tide broke the stillness. Edgar had been giving himself over to dreams of a brilliant future in which his only handicap consisted of his father's money. Would the cynical blasé critics be able to be as fair to him as if



### *By Moonlight*

he had been discovered among the peasants of Italy?

Suddenly he realized that never would a more wonderful stage-setting be his than that which now surrounded him. He rose on his elbow and looked up again at Violet's windows.

Then he began to sing. Into the girl's unrestful dreams the sound fell like balm:—

“Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine.”

She was wide awake suddenly and looking wide-eyed toward the open windows.

“Leave but a kiss within the cup  
And I'll not ask for wine.”

Her heart beat fast and she pressed her hand over her eyes, every faculty absorbed in listening to the melting loveliness of the voice.

Last night she would have knelt happily by the open window and called out a hushed “Bravo,” to the singer.

Now she lay perfectly still after the song ceased.

“It is because there is n't any other girl here,” she reflected. “He is a fashionable man with countless friends. I am a dancing-teacher





## *The Inner Flame*

whom he forgets in town and always will forget. — That's the most beautiful voice in the world," she thought with swift irrelevance; but Edgar, looking up at the windows, saw only blankness. He smiled to himself. He felt that she was not asleep.

The moon shed a wondrous luminous glow in the clear heavens as it sailed above him. The "man" looked into vast space as though no such hilarity as that of his earlier mood had been possible.

Edgar sang again. The higher the range of the song, with the more ease did his voice thrill the still night.

"Oh, Moon of my delight, that knows no wane,  
The Moon of heaven is rising once again.  
How oft hereafter rising shall she look  
Through this same garden after me in vain!

And when thyself with shining foot shall pass  
Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,  
And in thy joyous errand reach the spot where I made  
one,  
Turn down an empty glass!"

Violet did not know when or how she reached the window, but the ending of the song found her kneeling there, sobbing quietly, her head buried on her crossed arms. The moonlight fell on her shining hair. Edgar saw her and,

## *By Moonlight*

springing up, came near, careful to keep in shadow, for other window shades had risen.

"Violet!" he called softly.

No answer.

"Violet!" he said again. A hand white in the moonlight motioned him away, and he believed that she was weeping. Tears of sympathy, of triumph, sprang to his own eyes. So before very long would hundreds be shaken by his art.

"Just say good night, Violet," he begged softly; but she would not look up. She waved her hand again, and her shade came down.

Only one week since she had come to the island and it seemed months. Her aunt's words had pierced what she knew now had been a hope. How could she have been so insane as to hope it! Even given such a wild supposition as that Edgar Fabian would marry a nobody, what comfort or peace was in store for his wife? Violet had seen a play called "The Concert," in which a wife had been obliged to share her artist husband with a miscellaneous lot of female admirers. Better a thousand times to marry a shoemaker or any other obscure body and so be left to his undisturbed possession.

Aunt Amy was terribly right. More right than she knew.

## *The Inner Flame*

Violet crept back to bed in a tumult of sensible reasoning, accompanying which was an intoxicating obbligato of divine music, which sang and sang through her excited brain.

Meanwhile Edgar, strolling back deliberately through the field, smiled at his own thoughts. So the mocking eyes had been quenched. What a fine combination that girl was: so spirited, so sincere, so temperamental.

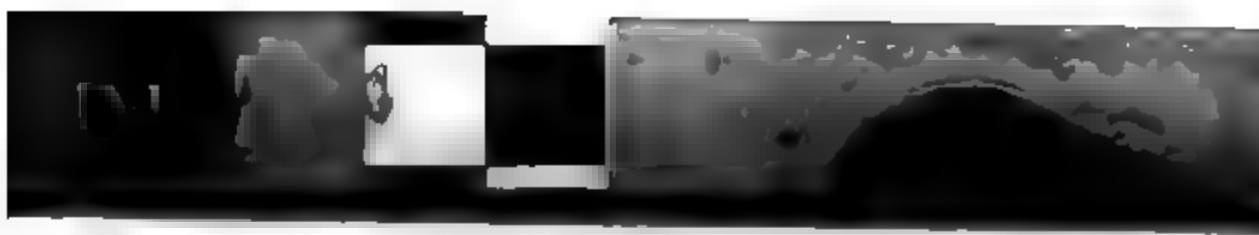
Kathleen's appeal recurred to him. "She's right, I suppose," he reflected. "After smelling hothouse flowers all winter, the wild rose is alluring; but —" his further thoughts were vague; but they comprised a virtuous intention of fair play towards the girl whom he had left weeping at the feet of his genius.

Kathleen sprang to a sitting posture as Philip approached the hammock, and sitting on its edge, swung gently.

"Well," he said, smiling, "are n't we going to the rocks?"

"Oh, are we?"

"Certainly. I was afraid I should n't get back before you had gone. I was afraid you and Edgar might be making the most of the opportunity for a fraternal *tête-à-tête*."



### *By Moonlight*

"We were; but we found the piazza satisfactory for it."

"Blasé creatures!" returned Phil. "Hurry, Kathleen," he added eagerly. "Get your coat."

"I wonder if mother may not need me."

"No one needs you so much as I do to-night," was the impulsive response. "The Villa finished, a summer's work before me, a full moon, a rising tide. I feel as if I could hardly contain myself to-night, and I've been holding my wings folded, and listening to Miss Foster and Eliza deplore the high price of fruit, and sympathizing with Miss Manning's headache, and holding wool for Mrs. Wright, all the time in a prickly heat for fear you would be gone somewhere; and then to get over here and find you lying like a little white cloud in the hammock — it's just like everything else that happens to me — just the best thing in the world!"

Kathleen laughed at the boyish joy of his tone. "Well, I'll see if mother needs me," she said, and went into the house and to her mother's room.

The moonlight streamed across the floor and the figure on the bed turned. "Is that you,

## *The Inner Flame*

Kathleen?" asked the prostrate one, through her nose.

"Yes, how are you feeling, dear? Can I do anything for you?"

"Why, yes, Kathleen. If you've had enough of the piazza, you might light the lamp and read to me a little while."

The simple request magnified itself to a disaster. Kathleen frowned, not at her mother, but at herself. Was this all the progress she had made?

"Shall I leave Phil alone?" she asked quietly.

Mrs. Fabian revived. "I thought he was over at the Wrights."

"He was; but he just came home. Violet had a headache, too."

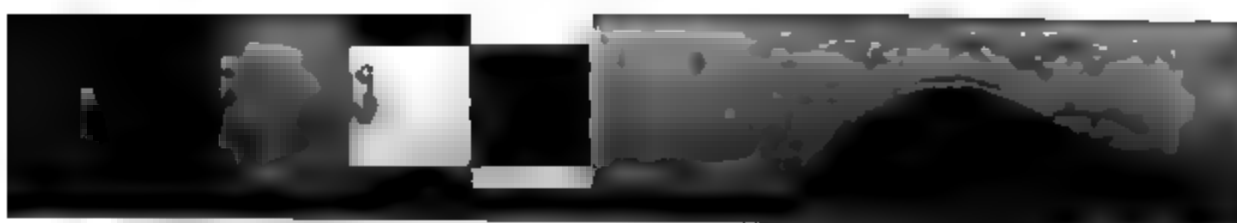
"Where is Edgar?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, then, stay with him. It's too bad for a headache in every house to spoil his evening. I wonder if I could n't get down to the piazza. Perhaps I'd feel better in the fresh air."

A little pulse, its existence hitherto unsuspected, began doing queer things in Kathleen's throat.

"Phil wants to go down to the rocks," she said.



### *By Moonlight*

"Well, why does n't he? He was mooning all over the island alone last night."

"He thinks I am going with him. I came in for my coat. Shall I tell him you need me?"

"Oh, no. Go with him. And don't speak to me when you come in. I shall be asleep. I'm feeling better."

Kathleen came over to the bed and kissed her mother, and Mrs. Fabian patted her hand. "Tell Phil I wish I could go, too," she said with nasal sleepiness.

Kathleen smiled, and going to her own room took a white polo coat and hurried downstairs.

Phil met her with relief, and she gave him a couple of cushions.

"I began to think," he said, "that she did want you."

"Only for a minute," returned Kathleen. "She sent word she wished she was able to come with us."

The girl looked up at her companion as they moved down on the grass and he smiled at her with bravado.

"Not one polite lie to-night," he answered; "I want you all to myself. Think how seldom it has happened."

Kathleen laughed from sheer contentment.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I think Cap'n James is the only one who has seen you alone," she replied.

"He's been a trump: and now," Phil inflated his lungs and looked about the irregular outline of the island lying in sheeted silver, and at the great lighthouses flashing in the distance, "I have a foothold in this paradise."

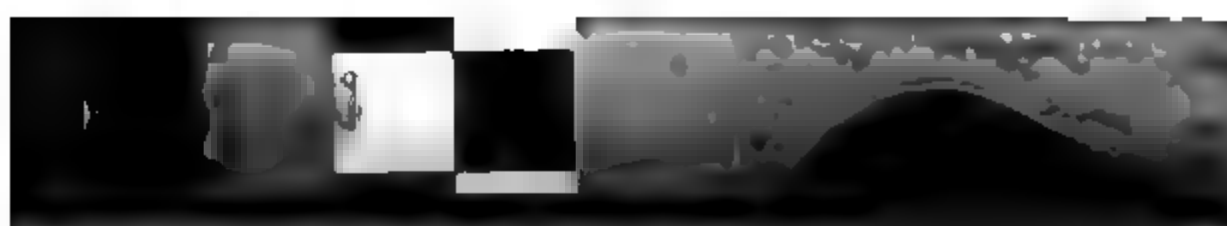
Their destination was the spot where rocks rose highest on the island's shore, turning the rising tide into boiling cauldrons of white foam, and meeting the tremendous impact of the great waves with jagged granite shelves that flung the compact water high in fountains of diamonds. Giant power, giant unrest, fascinating beauty glittering with phosphorescence, and silvered for miles with moonlight.

"Let me help you, Kathleen," said Phil, offering his hand.

"'Bred and bawn in a briar patch,'" she responded, springing lightly over the rocks.

"I follow you, then," he answered; and Kathleen led the way to a partly sheltered nook, too inaccessible for most less-accustomed visitors, and so, remote from certain other figures which loomed penguin-like on points of rock.

"Father thinks he made the mistake of his



### *By Moonlight*

life in not buying the island outright," said the girl; "then there would n't be any penguins."

"Supposing you had bought the Villa Chantecler? Where would I be?" asked Phil, as he settled down a little below the seat she had chosen, and tried to put the second cushion behind her back.

"Not at all," she said, turning to him. "Share and share alike." She laughed softly. "When I'm married, I'm going to have the tenderloin cut in two. Once in a while a husband wants his wife to have it all, but mostly I've noticed the wife expects the husband to have it all."

"That's like my mother," said Phil, resting his elbow on the discarded cushion. "I have the most wonderful mother."

"I know you have." Kathleen met the eyes lifted to her with a gaze as grave as their own and a sympathy that opened the flood-gates to all that was pressing in her companion's heart to-night.

"No one but myself knows how wonderful," said Phil, looking back at the water, something swelling in his throat. After a pause he went on. "We never had much money, and I could n't pull away and do what I wished.





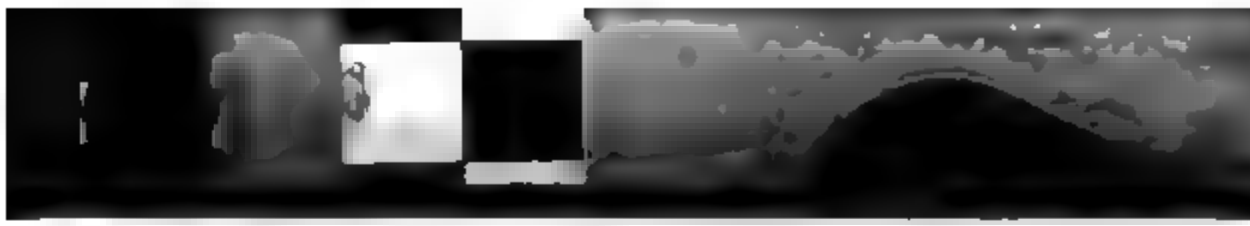
### *The Inner Flame*

That would be no return for my father's efforts and denials for me. Mother understood. Her whole life was a living example of self-denial and courage. She taught me to think clearly and showed me the value of noble-mindedness, virtue, and controlling love. It was her splendid patience and wisdom that gave me education and standing-room in the world."

Kathleen did not speak, but he felt her receptivity.

"It was very early when I began to think and dream and plan along entirely different lines from those my lot promised. My whole being from a child cried out for artistic expression; and what pathetic outbursts there were! I understand it now. Does n't it seem natural for a child born in the month of May with a mother like a Madonna, sweet and gentle, to chase butterflies and pick flowers for their beauty and fragrance? And that child — I can't remember when he did n't long to create; but firmly, day by day, he was urged toward the practical. Create! Yes; but let it be machinery; money.

"The marble building with its sculpture against the blue of the sky, the painting that makes men wonder, the book that sets their hearts to throbbing — that was what I craved;



### *By Moonlight*

and often lost my head in craving, my whole being vibrating with a great cry of joy in the thought of such creation. Can't you see it? The month of May — and the flowers — and God's universe — and the boy!"

The last word choked in Phil's throat.

"Your mother," said Kathleen in a low voice. "She understood."

Phil looked up, and surprised the tenderness, the comprehension in the face bent toward him. "She understood," he returned slowly, "but she thought she saw her duty. I went to college. I forgot her many times, and every time I was a fool. At last, I came out and was put to the treadmill; but in my last year at school a wonderful thing happened to my mother. A Mr. Tremaine visited our cabin and left with her a little book. Sometime I will tell you about it if you care to know; but it made a great difference in her life. My work in the mine seemed typical of my life. The grime, the clank of machinery, the perfunctory drudgery, and the hand's breath of blue sky above. I crushed my longings and tried to be practical. Could purgatory be worse than, with such a nature, to be caged in underground gloom? The glimpse of sky was like my mother's eyes with their joy,

## *The Inner Flame*

their knowledge. She talked to me, she permeated me with the new point of view; the new strength; the new patience. My father praised my efficiency, and then suddenly the nightmare was broken by a message as from heaven — you know the rest!" Philip turned quickly, and again met his companion's speaking eyes.

"Kathleen, can you forgive me!" he exclaimed. "This has been an orgy of egotism!" Even as he gazed, the dark eyes veiled themselves. Only then he realized how wide-open the doors had been thrown.

"I thank you for telling me," she said, with her direct look.

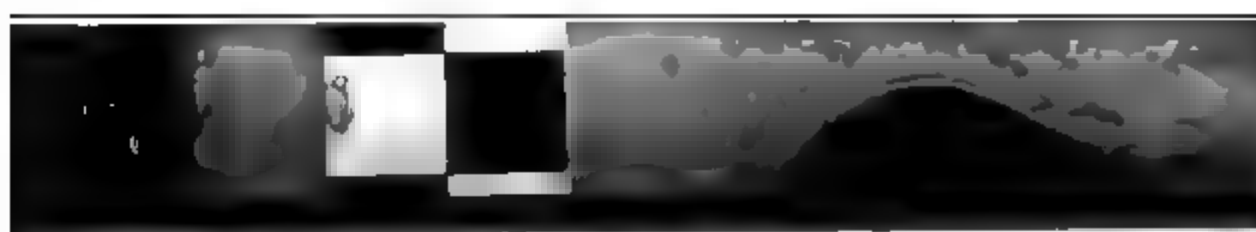
"I seem," he answered, with a vague unrest, — "I seem always to have been going to tell you. There is — there is no one but you to whom I could talk like that." He stared out on the water, then changed the position of the cushion.

"Was that Mr. Tremaine a publisher?" asked Kathleen.

"I don't know. Mother has always wished she might know who he was."

"There is a Mr. Tremaine who lives in Gramercy Park who is a friend of father's."

"Gramercy Park?" repeated Phil, and sud-



### *By Moonlight*

denly remembered: "Then I believe his son and heir was my first and only patron. I made a picture for a small Tremaine one day in the park with Violet Manning."

"Would n't it be odd if it turned out to be the same?" said Kathleen.

A magnificent burst of spray clattering in myriad drops on the rock near them warned them that their tenure of the place was short.

The girl smiled. "I think, as we have spoken of Mr. Tremaine, I must return your confidence with another"; and Phil, looking up suddenly, saw a new shy consciousness in the slender face which was for some reason disagreeable.

"Don't tell me to-night, Kathleen!" he said impulsively.

"Why not?" she asked, wondering.

"I don't know," he answered honestly; "only that everything is perfect. What you tell me might change it. Any change would be for the worse."

Kathleen smiled thoughtfully into space.

"I suppose," she said, with a little shrug, "if you had urged me I might have popped back into my shell. I'm terribly at home in a shell! But as it is I think I'm going to tell you."

## *The Inner Flame*

Phil looked at the delicate face, smiling in the moonlight.

"Is it something you have made up your mind to do?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, looking at him, surprised. "How did you guess?"

"Then don't tell me till to-morrow. I want to think that this won't end — that it will always be a rising tide and — and we watching it together."

That newly acquired pulse of Kathleen's asserted itself again, but she swallowed past it resolutely. "Oh, I shall still be able to watch the rising tide — once in a while," she answered, laughing. "But I'm going to tell you. I'm writing a little book. There!"

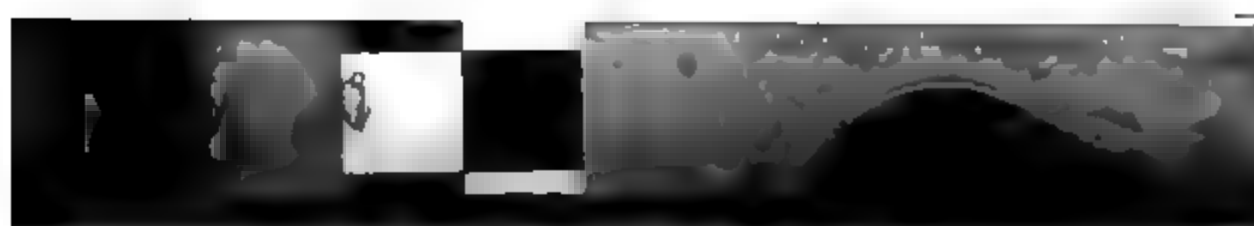
"What?" cried Phil.

"Yes, and I'm going to publish it. Mr. Tremaine likes the idea. He is the only one I've told."

"And is that all?" asked Phil eagerly.

"All!" Kathleen regarded him with mock indignation. The little pulse prevented its being genuine. "Is all you're going to do, just to paint pictures, Mr. Sidney?"

"Why, I think that's bully," exclaimed Phil, turning so suddenly as to test the



### *By Moonlight*

sharpness of his rocky couch. "Tell me about it."

"Well, for the past year, I have been bewitched by the microscope. It reveals a world that we are too clumsy to discern. The idea occurred to me to write a series of microscopic fairy tales."

"Fine! Fine!"

"It's great fun. And of course they will be illustrated."

"Who's going to do it?"

"You."

Phil looked up quickly. She was laughing and blushing. "Of course you would n't consider it," she said, "but there might be money in it. How do you feel toward pot-boilers?"

"I don't know, Kathleen. Tell me more. What sort of illustrations?"

"Well, you saw me with that moss yesterday that I had brought up out of the woods? The slide I was making was to be the design for a tree in the illustration. I thought to make the pictures educational in a way. To put in a corner of the page what the original was. Moss, seaweed, an aphide, or whatever it happened to be."

"What a pretty idea!" said Phil.



## *The Inner Flame*

"Of course, you don't want to do it, though," she went on in a different tone. "Just as your studio is finished, and you are aching to paint."

"It's good of you to think of me," replied the artist warmly. "I don't know that I could do that work. I should have to satisfy Mr. Tremaine with a sample. We could n't put our educational tips on the pictures, but there could be a thin cover for each illustration with the description on a corner of that."

"Oh, yes, much better," agreed Kathleen.

They talked a little longer and the splendid tide suddenly splashed them with glittering spray.

"A broad hint," laughed Kathleen, springing up. "We must go back."

Phil sighed. "I'm sorry," he said, and getting reluctantly to his feet, he started to give his hand to Kathleen, then remembering that she preferred independence, he picked up the cushions and started ahead of her.

They had nearly crossed the rocks when a cry from her arrested him.

He turned. She had sunk down in the moonlight.

"Oh, how dull of me!" she cried. "I'm used to my rubber-soled shoes."



### *By Moonlight*

“What! Turned your ankle?” Phil flung the cushions over upon the grass, and hurried to her.

“I’m afraid so.”

“I ought to have helped you,” said Phil, with contrition, “but I thought you preferred —”

“I do. I’m a regular mountain goat.” Kathleen was half laughing in a way that showed her pain.

Phil lifted her gently, and she went on: —

“Everybody knows nowadays that the best way to treat a strain is to walk right ahead. Oh!”

“Yes, that may do on flat ground,” said Phil; “I’m a mountain goat too, so don’t be afraid”; and, lifting her in his arms, he carried her over the remaining rocks and set her down upon the grassy bank.





## CHAPTER XXVI

### TIDES

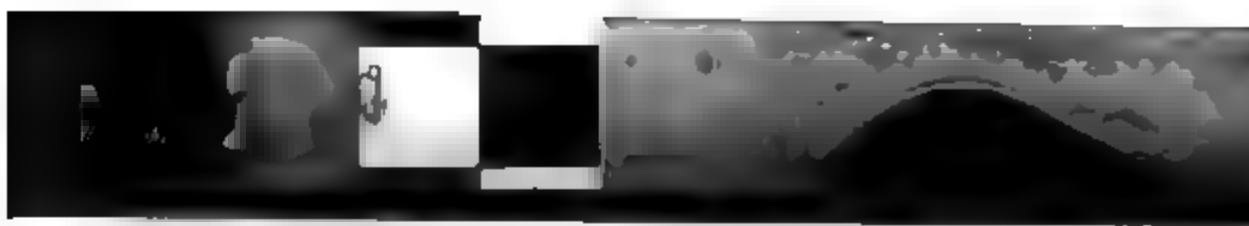
PHILIP paused a moment when he reached the grassy bank.

"You're quite sure you wish to walk?" he said.

"I certainly am," she returned with an effort at lightness. "It's the best thing I can do, now that I've been so careless."

He set her down gently, and picked up the cushions with one hand while he put the other under her arm, and they started; but there was no path; the points of granite and the grassy hummocks made difficult walking for sound feet. Phil felt his companion's sudden limps and cringes, the while she was talking valiantly of the satisfaction it was to feel that a little pain did n't matter, so long as one knew that the best thing for a strain was exercise; but all the time it seemed to her that home was miles away, and that this Transgressors' Boulevard would never end.

Phil smiled down at the dark uncovered head



### *Tides*

so near his shoulder; then as she sank in an unexpected hollow:—

“Pluck is all very well, Kathleen,” he said, “but I’m going to pick you up again.”

“No, no, Phil! You could never carry me home. I’m much too heavy to be doing these foolish things.” Tears of vexation stood in the girl’s eyes.

“I need n’t carry you home,” he returned quietly, “but it is all my fault that you slipped. As soon as we get to level ground you shall try again. Cushions will be safe in Arcadia, I fancy,” he added, storing them at the foot of a rock they were passing. “I can come back for them.”

“Put this heavy polo coat with them,” said Kathleen, trying not to cry. “No need of carrying any more than you have to. Oh, Phil, really! I could hop. Could n’t I hop if you lifted me on one side?”

“We’ll hop, skip, and jump when we get on the level,” he returned, wrapping the coat carefully about her, and taking her up again.

“Put your arm around my neck, please. There we are.” He moved on at a good pace. “Can’t you feel that it’s easy?”

“I’m so ashamed to make you this trouble.” Kathleen’s lip quivered.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I'm so ashamed that you are hurt, but I need the exercise," rejoined her bearer. "What am I going to do now that I don't have to struggle with the Villa? Have you a rowboat?"

"Yes," returned Kathleen, in a small voice.

They were approaching a cottage with sightless midnight eyes. She had no idea what time it was, but devoutly hoped they were the only persons awake on the island. It was ridiculous to be carried about like this, and a terrible imposition on an innocent guest; but how wonderful he was, striding along from hummock to hummock with apparent ease.

"Then I'll do some rowing, if you'll let me. Do you like to row?"

"Yes," came again in such a small, choked voice, that Phil suddenly turned his head and his face came close to Kathleen's. The elegant remote Miss Fabian, with the slumbrous eyes and the red-brown hair, was a helpless child in his arms.

"Are you suffering?" he asked, and such a note of tenderness sounded suddenly in his voice that the girl's heart gave a great throb.

"Only in my mind," she faltered, trying to laugh. "You'll set me down as soon as we reach the point, won't you? It's easy from there."



### *Tides*

It was not very easy from there, but Kathleen set her teeth, and walked it, leaning on Phil's arm, and sometimes stopping to rest.

"And I thought it was such a small island," she said with a little sighing laugh when at last the home piazza was reached.

Philip helped her upstairs to her room.

"Shall I knock on your mother's door?" he asked.

"No, indeed. I can get on perfectly well now." She held out her hand. "Will you forgive me?"

He took it and looked straight into her eyes without speaking.

For an instant he held her hand, still mute, then turned, and instead of going to his room went downstairs again.

Kathleen, closing her door softly, heard him. She stood a moment perfectly still, her lambent eyes looking into space, the long straight lines of her white coat shining in the dim room.

"If it should be!" she thought with awe. "If it should be!"

Philip went out on the porch. The tide was receding and dragging in and out the stones of the beach. He frowned thoughtfully at the roll-

## *The Inner Flame*

ing expanse. "This is disturbing," he reflected. His blood was pumping and dragging mightily at locked doors of his own which he knew must be locked for years to come.

"And even then it cannot be Kathleen who opens them," he reminded himself. While she was flashing about to fashionable functions in her limousine the coming season, he would still be planning which meal to make the substantial one of the day.

"The cushions!" he thought suddenly, and, finding relief in action, he began running back with long, even strides, through the silent, silvered fields.

Before ten o'clock the next morning Edgar presented himself at the farmhouse to make inquiries for the invalid. He was eager to begin treating Violet right; and as a commencement he brought a box of bonbons which he had ordered from the city before that resolution was made. However, flowers and candy were conventional attentions. So were books. He reflected that no one could criticize his giving Violet a marked copy of Tennyson.

"She is n't here," Mrs. Wright told him when he reached the house. "She has gone.

## *Tides*

somewhere to get an extra coat of tan and see the tide come in."

"Why did n't I come sooner!" exclaimed Edgar, vexed. "I thought her headache — I thought she would n't be up early."

"Oh, I think you must have exorcised that last night," said Mrs. Wright. "How we all enjoyed the medicine! Will you promise to sing every night if one of us will fall ill?"

Edgar smiled and twisted his mustache. "We have a lame duck over at our house," he said. "Kathleen managed to slip on the rocks last night. She's as plucky as they make 'em, though. She's limping around. Phil was with her — not very bright of him, I must say."

"Oh, I'm sorry he has that cloud over his first morning at the studio," returned Mrs. Wright. "I saw him go in there an hour ago."

"You're sure Violet is n't there?" asked Edgar quickly.

"Oh, perfectly," rejoined Mrs. Wright quietly. "We're as much warned off the Villa as ever, now, you know. I hope he is going to do great things."

"Yes, I hope so," said Edgar absently. "This full sunlight is n't particularly good for Violet's

## *The Inner Flame*

head. Don't you think I'd better find her and get her out of it?"

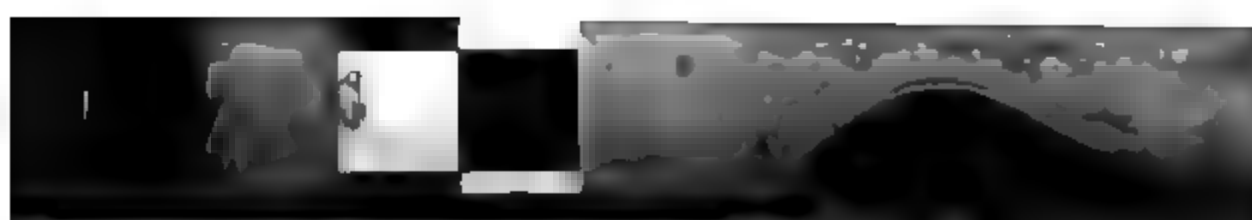
"Oh, it's the steadiest little head in the world. Last night was simply the exception that proves the rule."

"Well, then, she'll be fit for tennis. I'm going to find her and see if we can't have some singles before dinner."

"All right, if you can find her."

Edgar tossed his head. "Perhaps I could n't put a girdle 'round the earth, but this island's a cinch"; and with the beribboned box under his arm and the sun glinting on his polished blond head, Edgar set off running toward the rocks where Kathleen had met her slip.

Perhaps, he reflected, it was just as well that Violet had been *hors de combat* last evening. If they had come down here in the moonlight, and he had sung, and she had turned upon him that wonderful, confiding, devout look which warmed every fibre of his vanity, there is no telling what he might have said or done. He was shrewd enough to know that Mrs. Larrabee's rebuff had caused a rebound in which just such an innocent, womanly girl as Violet Manning could catch his heart in both hands. She had laughed at him yesterday afternoon, and to



### *Tides*

force her to capitulate he might have done something foolish in the evening. Now that pitfall — the time, the place, and the girl — was past, and the bright clear winds of morning found him forewarned and forearmed; but friendly, perfectly friendly. He thoroughly liked Violet Manning.

All this time he was running toward the show-place at high tide, the precipitous rocks whose walls and crannies repulsed the crashing waves, causing a never-ending series of fountains, and cascades of crystal water.

A few penguins in shade hats studded the heights this morning, but Violet was not among them. He walked past slowly, scanning the rocks. A few rods farther on, a small harbor pierced the island's side. Its farther bank was soft with evergreens; a sturdy growth of tall spruces which fixed their roots amid the inhospitable rocks.

An artist had set up his easel on the near shore, and was sitting on a camp-stool before it, working busily. A large straw hat was crowded down to the tops of his ears to thwart the wind, and Edgar wondered who might be the competitor of the painter who was working away at the Villa Chantecler. He glanced



## *The Inner Flame*

carelessly at the artist and then renewed his scrutiny of the rocks; being so engrossed, that the next time his gaze went forward, he saw that a girl was lying on the rock near the easel, leaning on her elbow and alternately watching the artist and the sea.

Edgar suspected the truth with a wave of anger. How could Phil be in two places at once? He had allowed Kathleen to slip on the rocks. Probably he had been absent-minded. This had been planned for; Mrs. Wright could n't have known it.

He strode forward.

"Good morning!" he said, with awe-inspiring dignity.

"Oh, hello," returned Violet carelessly, turning her head so as to see the newcomer.

Could this nonchalant girl be she who had wept at the window!

"I went over to the house to see how you were," said Edgar severely, "and Mrs. Wright said you were watching the tide."

"Yes," returned Violet, lazy in the sun, "but I found something so much better to watch."

"You can't see anything from there," declared Edgar, speaking crisply.



### *Tides*

"Do you allow that, Mr. Sidney?" asked the girl.

"I allow anything but people to talk to me," said Phil, busy with the blues and greens of the water.

"There, you see!" said Violet accusingly. "He had n't said a word of reproach to me before you came"; and the little minx allowed herself to throw a devoted glance in the direction of the artist's hat. If the mouse were going ultimately to make its escape, surely the kitten was entitled to whatever fun it could find in the situation.

Edgar pulled himself together.

"It's great just now," he said. "Don't you want to come out on the rocks, and see the row?"

Violet shook her head and touched her finger to her lips warningly.

Edgar scowled and looked at Phil's swift brush. Confound the girl, how was he to treat her magnanimously if she would n't give him an opportunity?

He held out the beribboned box and raised his eyebrows, gesturing with his head toward the rocks.

"Is there a string tied to it?" asked Violet,

## *The Inner Flame*

with a saucy, lazy smile; and Edgar lifted his chin superbly and tossed the box into her lap.

"The only girl here," she reflected; for she felt tempted to be flattered by the implied forethought.

"How perfectly sweet," she said and opened the luxurious box. Rising to her knees she lifted a chocolate in the little tongs and put it in Philip's mouth.

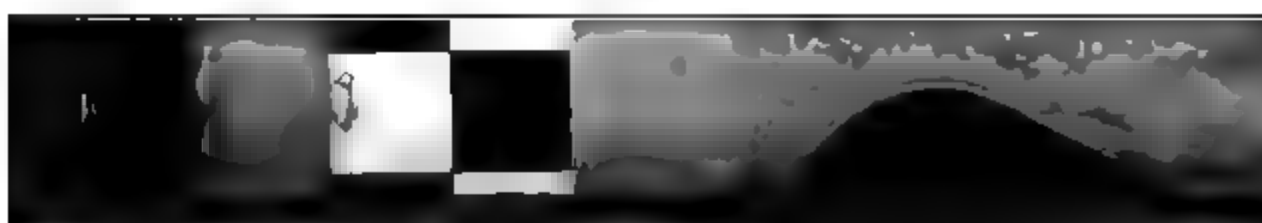
"*Mille remerciements*," he mumbled; "but don't do it again, please."

"Phil wants to be alone," said Edgar. "Can't you see that?" He held out his hand to Violet to rise. She ignored it, but rose with supple grace.

"Well," she said, "if little boys will come and chatter to me, I suppose I shall have to go. It's been so interesting, Mr. Sidney. That's going to be wonderful. I hope you'll let me watch you again sometime."

"You didn't really want to stay there, did you?" asked Edgar, when they had begun to climb out on the rocks at a point where there were no other gazers.

"Indeed I did, marplot," returned the girl, "but three's a crowd when one is painting."



### *Tides*

"Oh, very well," said Edgar, stiffly; "I'll stay away the next time."

"That's right. Do," returned Violet. "Have a chocolate? These are delicious."

"No, I thank you." Edgar gave a dark glance at his companion. He did not like her mood.

"I didn't know you cared more for painting than for music," he said.

"More?" she returned with wide eyes. "Oh, no, I'm an impartial and humble admirer of all the arts."

Was n't she going to speak of last evening? He stood in silence beside her for a space to give her opportunity; but she was engrossed in munching a chocolate.

"My!" she said, regarding the heavy, satin, heart-shaped crimson box admiringly, "I've gazed at these with awe in shop windows, and then gone in and bought ten cents worth in a striped bag. I feel so grand!"

"I was disappointed last night," said Edgar, his gloomy regard changing slowly to his best look of devotion. There was nothing for him in Violet's eyes this morning. The expression he craved must be brought back in order that he might exercise care to treat her fairly.

## *The Inner Flame*

"Because I could n't go to walk with Mr. Sidney?" she rejoined, with the ironical gayety Edgar hated. "I was, too; but your charming serenade almost made up for it."

Edgar ground the even teeth. "I suppose it was foolish of me to exert myself," he said. "I probably waked you up."

"Oh, it did n't sound like the least bit of exertion," replied Violet. "The ease of your singing is really its great charm. You did n't mind my laughing, right at the end, did you?"

"Laughing!"

"Yes; you see Miss Foster is on my side of the house, and when you sang

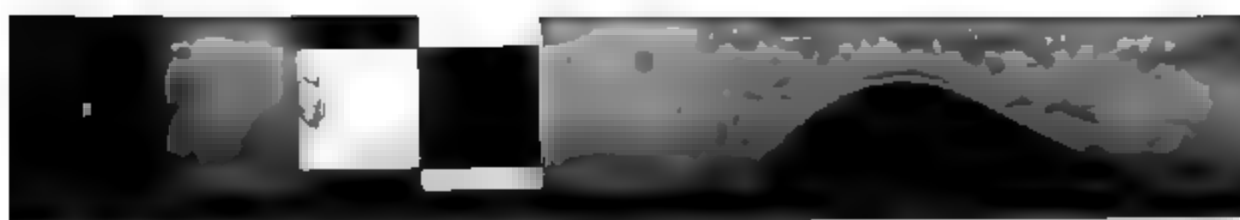
'Turn down an empty glass,'

I knew she'd think it was a prohibition song, and I nearly suffocated."

Edgar met her dancing eyes, and glared at her while she ate a chocolate with relish.

"And I thought you were temperamental!" he muttered.

"Do you wonder really that Maine is a prohibition state?" she asked conversationally. "Here, eat this peppermint one for me. I don't like them," and the even teeth opened mechanically to receive the bonbon she popped between



### *Tides*

them. "I mean because it's so intoxicating here anyway. Why, I can hardly keep my feet still this morning"; and as they were standing, Violet, on her flat rock, and with the great crimson heart pressed to her breast, began to clog.

Edgar half unconsciously moved away to where he could see her nimble feet. "Whistle," she laughed. "Whistle, and I won't come to you, my lad!"

Edgar whistled, he could n't help it. Her fair hair blowing, her sea-blue eyes shining, and her sure feet dancing, she seemed the incarnation of the radiant morning. He found himself patting in rhythm, and whistling like a bird until she tired and sank in a blue heap on the rock.

"Oh, it's a jolly world," she cried.

"And you're a jolly girl!" he exclaimed, striding over and flinging himself down beside her. "Why don't you teach me to do that? You promised."

"I've begun twice, have n't I? You have n't any patience."

"Oh, that was in the woods. What could I do on a hillside? Teach me in the summer house this afternoon."

"That's where you ought to be now, practising," said Violet.

## *The Inner Flame*

"I've put in half an hour this morning."

"That is n't enough. It's time for another."

"Oh, you want me to go, do you, so you can go back and watch Phil?"

"Well, I never before had a chance to see the wheels go 'round in a painting. Don't you think it's wonderful?"

"Yes, he's a wizard. It's a pity you could n't go with him last night. He took Kath and she managed to turn her ankle."

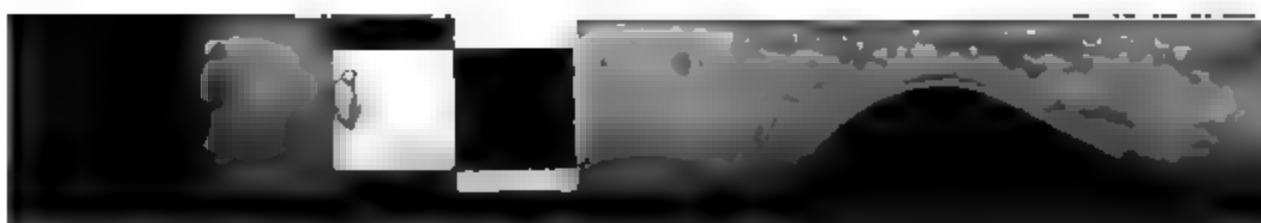
"So he has been telling me. I'm sorry. So you'd rather have had mine turned? Then I could n't have taught you to clog, remember."

"No; he might not have gone mooning around then. He might have paid more attention to *you*."

Violet glanced at the speaker out of the tail of her eye and ate a chocolate. Then she cast a look over on the point where the easel stood. "He is so good-looking," she sighed. "I like smooth-faced men."

"My mustache is catching it next, is it?" said Edgar irritably, twisting that treasure.

"Oh, I simply despise mustaches," rejoined Violet equably; "but of course if it makes you look older, or more dignified, or helps you in your career, you have to wear one."



### *Tides*

"I don't know as there's any 'have to' about it," returned Edgar. "It's just a matter of taste with me"; he made the addition with a superior carelessness.

"So it is with me," returned Violet with engaging frankness. "Here's another peppermint." She picked it up in the silver tongs. "Open your mouth and shut your eyes and I'll give you something to make you wise."

Edgar jerked back his head, seized the confection in his fingers, and scaled it across the rocks.

"I loathe peppermint," he said shortly, "and as for making me wise, you're making me wiser every day. Will you, or will you not give me a lesson in clogging this afternoon?"

"I *will!*" returned Violet, dramatically. "You paid partly in advance last night, and I'm the soul of honor!"

He met her mischievous eyes with a baffled look. He longed to shake her. His hand lifted mechanically to his mustache and dropped again. He had lost faith in that, too.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE SON

WHEN Philip returned to dinner that day he found a strange man sitting on the veranda with Kathleen. The table beside her was filled with loose sheets of paper, and she was reading aloud.

As Phil approached she looked up.

"We spoke of an angel last night," she said, "and lo, he appeared to-day. This is Mr. Tremaine, and he knows you already."

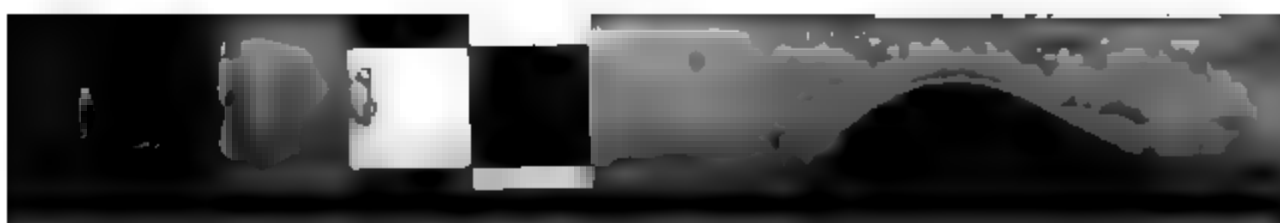
Phil laid down his impedimenta and his hat, and shook hands.

The grey-eyed portly stranger smiled as they greeted. "Miss Fabian has told me so much about you," he said, "that I am wondering if you belong to the Sidneys who took me in in the mountains of Montana one night five or six years ago."

Philip's perfunctory gaze quickened.

"And you left my mother a little book?" he asked quickly.

The pressure of the newcomer's handclasp tightened. He nodded.



### *The Son*

"The very same," he said. "And you do belong to that charming woman."

"You did a great deal for us, Mr. Tremaine," said Phil heartily.

"And this Kathleen child says we're not through with each other. She wants you to illustrate this clever little book of hers."

"If he will," put in the girl quickly. "You don't know yet what small business it will be for him to picture my stuff. Show us what you have done this morning."

"I hear you are my neighbor in Gramercy Park," said Mr. Tremaine while Phil stooped to get his picture. "I hear that the artist who did my son's treasure, 'The Proud Robin,' stands before me."

Phil laughed and turned his canvas about. A great wave uplifted its heavy snowy crest, just at the point of breaking into rushing surge.

"Stand back," cried Kathleen, "it's coming!" Her cheeks reddened. "You do such true things, Phil!"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Tremaine, "Miss Fabian is right. That's really great, Mr. Sidney. One gets the weight of the water. I think the breadth and perception of the mountains helped you in that. How long have you been

## *The Inner Flame*

so intimate with the physiognomy of old Ocean?"

"I have been at this off and on for some days in time stolen from house decoration."

"There is time before dinner," said Kathleen, "and Mr. Tremaine is going to stay such a little while, take him over to the Villa. I want him to be sure to see it though I begrudge his seeing it without me, too!"

"Sure you can't go?" asked Mr. Tremaine.

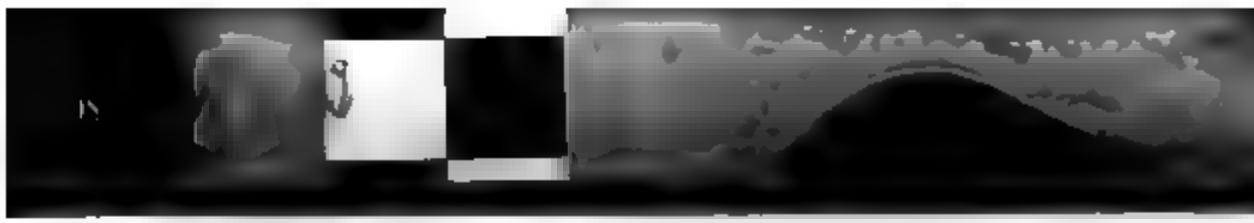
Kathleen looked ruefully at her right foot, wearing a loose slipper of her mother's.

"That field is so rough," she said.

"We 'll make an armchair," said Phil.

The girl shook her head. "No, I'll gather up my book. Mr. Tremaine likes it, so I'm happy though lame, and you must talk over the illustrations together."

In truth she was glad that these two should have the opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* and she smiled happily to herself as she picked up the flying sheets. There was color in her cheeks, the rose-color that seemed this morning to tinge the universe. It was such a beautiful world, and for Mr. Tremaine suddenly to appear and to approve her work and to meet Phil — Phil whose eyes had seemed this morning always to see her



### *The Son*

and regard her reflectively, instead of looking over or through her — all this made a wonderful combination, a strange, sweet expectancy, as of harmonious progressions which could but resolve into one triumphant chord.

The dinner hour approached and Mrs. Fabian came out on the piazza.

"How are you, poor child?" she asked with commiseration; then meeting Kathleen's eyes, she laughed. "Here I am pitying you, and you look as if you'd been left a million. What is it? Is Mr. Tremaine so pleased with your stories?"

"He thinks they'll do," returned Kathleen.

"Very modest," said Mrs. Fabian; "but I'm quite sure from your looks that he said you were a second Hans Christian Andersen. Keeping it a secret from me, too! I'm a very good judge of stories, and you might have asked my opinion about those, at any rate."

"I felt very shy about it, mother, but now I'm just bubbling with encouragement; and perhaps Phil will make the pictures."

Mrs. Fabian regarded the rosy face admiringly.

"There, you see his business is coming along, and this morning I gave him the commission to paint our portraits."

## *The Inner Flame*

Even this news could not dampen Kathleen's present mood.

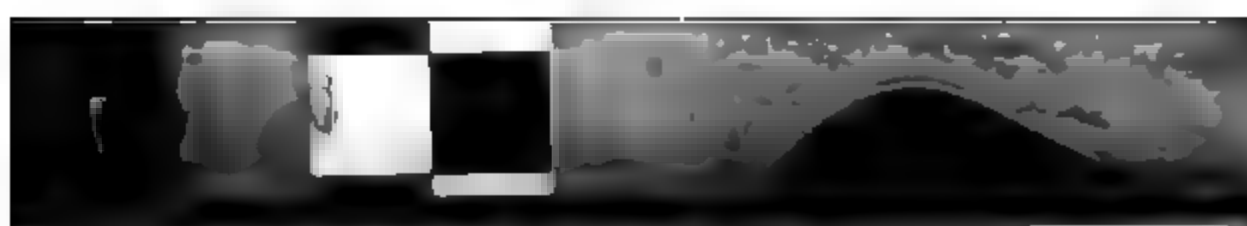
"Yours," she returned. "Remember, I told you I refused to be perpetuated as I look now."

"I never saw you look as pretty as you do to-day, in your whole life," said Mrs. Fabian, gazing as she spoke.

The girl laughed from sheer satisfaction. "Is the big head so becoming?" she returned.

"I saw Phil taking Mr. Tremaine over to the studio," said Mrs. Fabian. "Edgar said this morning he wanted to bring Violet to dinner. He will be surprised to find Mr. Tremaine here. We shall have quite a party. I hope they won't all be late. If Phil and Mr. Tremaine get to talking over at the studio they won't know what time it is."

The air at the island, however, was of a nature to create an inner monitor which called to dinner, so the two couples soon approached from opposite directions. Mr. Tremaine and Phil were talking busily as they came, and Kathleen noted Violet's crimson heart while she drew near. She gazed questioningly at her brother whose alert happy face turned red as he met her eyes; but Violet was self-possessed when Kathleen greeted her.



### *The Son*

"Pardon my remaining enthroned, Violet," she said. "I'm not precisely wasting steps to-day."

"I heard about it," returned the guest, coming up the steps and meeting Mrs. Fabian. "I do hope it's nothing serious."

"No, indeed. I shall soon forget it."

"I suppose neither of you will have a chocolate before dessert, but they're very very good." Violet opened the box temptingly as she took a seat beside Kathleen.

"Who is that coming with Phil?" asked Edgar.

"My publisher," returned Kathleen, proudly. "Just think, Edgar! I've written some stories, and Mr. Tremaine has accepted them!"

Edgar lifted his eyebrows and smiled wonderingly into his sister's happy face. "Good work, Kath! It may really pay to be a highbrow. Why have you kept so still about it?"

"Oh, that was natural. Supposing Mr. Tremaine had said, 'You're a nice child, Kathleen, but your little yarns are trash.' How then! Should n't I be glad nobody saw me hide my diminished head?"

Edgar continued to regard her curiously. He

### *The Inner Flame*

had never before noticed how really good-looking Kath was.

Violet expressed her interest and sympathy heartily, and while she was speaking, the other guests arrived and Mr. Tremaine met his son's dancing-teacher with pleasure.

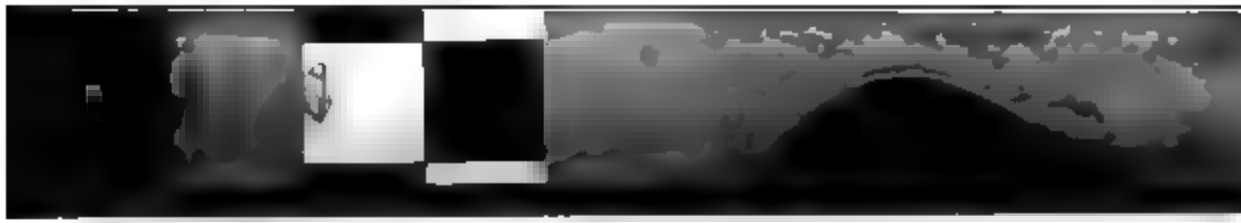
It was a gay dinner-party, and Kathleen glowed with satisfaction in Mr. Tremaine's manifest interest in Phil. He could be such a useful friend.

They had coffee on the veranda, and while Edgar was planning in what manner and how soon he could segregate himself and Violet in the summer house, the boy whose duty it was to bring the mail appeared with the letters. At a sign from Mrs. Fabian he handed them to her.

She ran them over with a smile. "I'm always impolite," she said, "when Mr. Fabian's letter comes, and I think everybody will forgive me." She laid the others on the rail beside her and opened the letter she held.

"I'm hoping so much he will set the day for coming."

The smiling expectancy of her face gave way to bewilderment and incredulity as she read. No one observed it, for Kathleen had started to tell an island adventure.



### *The Son*

Her mother's voice broke in upon the tale.

"Kathleen!" she said breathlessly, "I don't understand this letter. Father is in trouble of some kind. He is trying to comfort me. He says to ask you—"

Mrs. Fabian looked up at Kathleen whose face was transformed while her mother spoke. The color left it, the laughing eyes grew startled, and she tried to rise.

Phil sprang to his feet, "What do you want, Kathleen?"

"The letters!" she said. "See if there is one for me?"

Edgar, who had been observing how remarkably good was the line of Violet's hair at the nape of her neck, brought his thoughts back with difficulty to his sister. Kath was looking frightened. What was the matter?

Mr. Tremaine leaned forward in his chair and looked with serious questioning at Kathleen while she tore open a letter from her father. Her brow drew together as she read. Mrs. Fabian regarded her helplessly, two sheets of paper blowing in her fingers.

When finally the girl dropped her letter her face had flushed again. She rose from her chair with difficulty.





## *The Inner Flame*

"I must go to father immediately," she said.

Phil was at her side in an instant. "You can't do that," he returned, "but you can send me."

Mrs. Fabian's lips were parted. Edgar frowned and looked from one to another; then he too sprang to his feet.

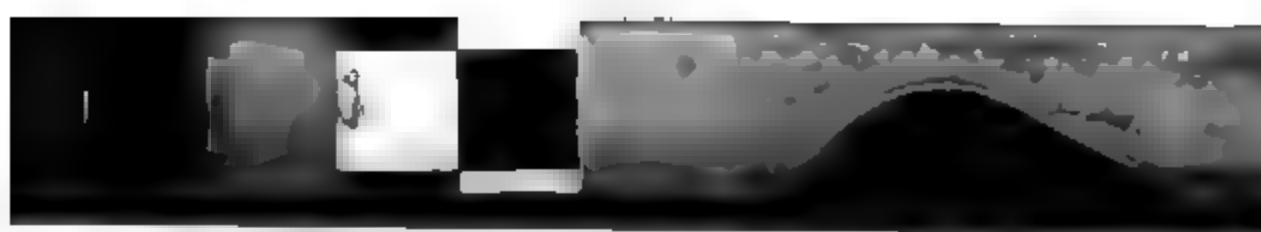
"What is this, Kath?" he asked with sudden authority.

His sister regarded him absently. Edgar would suffer, of course, but just now, in the crucial moment, he did n't count; and she! Oh, how could fate have been so unkind as to hamper her at the only time in her life when it would make any difference! A time when she longed for wings to carry her to her father's side and let her throw her arms around his neck.

She looked at Edgar's frowning, questioning face with curious vagueness.

"Father has lost a great deal of money," she said, "and friends as well, because he would not yield to plans which he considered dishonorable. He told me before we left that it might come; but he had no idea the crisis was right upon him. Oh, I must, I must go to father — at once — at once!" The girl limped toward the door.

"You can't go to-day," said Phil decidedly,



### *The Son*

"but I can. I will go on this next boat with Mr. Tremaine. Tell me what—"

"What are you talking about!" It was Edgar who spoke, and his tone turned every eye upon him. His nostrils were dilated and his eyes looked dark. "Father in trouble! I'm going to him, of course."

He tried to speak quietly, but there was a thrill in his tone that echoed in Kathleen's heart. She knew as she looked at the new stern expression of the *debonair* countenance that in that minute the boy had become a man.

Violet gazed at him with a swelling heart and swept poor Phil with a supercilious glance wholly undeserved, but of which he was unconscious.

Edgar hastened into the house to make his preparations and Kathleen and Phil exchanged a look.

"It's all for the best," said Phil in a low tone. "Edgar will find himself."

Kathleen's hands were clasped on her breast. Mrs. Fabian regarded her beseechingly. "What do you mean?" she cried, her voice breaking hysterically. "Money and friends! What do you mean?"

Kathleen sank into the chair beside her. "I

## *The Inner Flame*

mean that father is an honest man," she said proudly.

Mr. Tremaine came to Mrs. Fabian's other side. "I was at college with your husband," he said. "Henry Fabian was always doing fine things. I suspect that this last move, whatever it is, is one of the finest. I would trust him before I would myself."

Mrs. Fabian looked from one to the other, tears running down her cheeks.

"I can't have my portrait painted, Phil," she faltered. "We're very poor."

Phil knelt down before her and put his arms around her and she rested her head on his shoulder and sobbed quietly.

"Perhaps not poor," he said; "but what if you are, Aunt Isabel? Look about at this beautiful place with everything to make people happy. Health and freedom and honor beside; and Edgar will bring his father here and everything will straighten out and we shall make him forget his troubles."

"No motor, Phil," came from the sobbing woman. "I can't imagine living without a motor."

"Indeed you can. You're going to show Mr. Fabian what a good sport he married; and we're all going to cheer him up and make him forget



### *The Son*

his nightmare before fall. You have everything that's real left—unless Mr. Fabian breaks down under this strain," added Phil artfully.

He had struck the right note. Mrs. Fabian lifted her head and wiped her eyes wildly. "I'm going with Edgar," she cried. "Henry may be ill. I shall go."

"No, dear mother," said Kathleen, gently taking her hand. "Let Edgar manage this alone. He will wire us at once."

It was nearly time for the boat and Edgar came out of the house with his bag. All his machinations of the morning had not succeeded in bringing to Violet's eyes the expression that grew there when she saw him ready to start on his hard journey. Speechless and unsmiling he pressed her hand, then kissed his mother and listened to her exhortations. Mr. Tremaine was ready, and together they started toward the wharf.

Philip was going to accompany them, but his aunt clung to him.

"Stay with us, Phil," she begged. "You are my son, too."

Mr. Fabian, heavy-lidded from a sleepless night, was working at the desk in his private

## *The Inner Flame*

office, when the door opened and closed quietly and quickly, and he looked up to see Edgar standing beside him. An added cloud passed over his face.

The young man saw it and he paid for many a misdemeanor in the pang it gave him.

"Father, I've come to see if I can be of any use," he said.

Mr. Fabian pushed his chair back and looked up at his visitor, the deep line in his forehead deeper.

"I know I have no experience, and little business sense; but if you'll take the trouble to explain the situation to me, I'll try to understand as I've never before tried to do anything; and I can at least carry out your instructions to the letter."

Mr. Fabian continued to gaze up into the sunburned face and the eyes that regarded him with steady purpose.

"I've lost a lot of money for you, my boy," he said. "Quite a half of everything I possessed."

"And come out clean," returned the other promptly. "Good for you."

Mr. Fabian kept silence, studying him for another space.



### *The Son*

"My son," he said at last, slowly, as if to himself. "I have a son"; and he held out his hand.

Edgar clasped it in silence. Then he spoke again. "I have n't had any breakfast, and of course I could n't sleep; so my head is n't worth much just now. Can you spare time to come out and talk to me while I eat, or shall I go alone?"

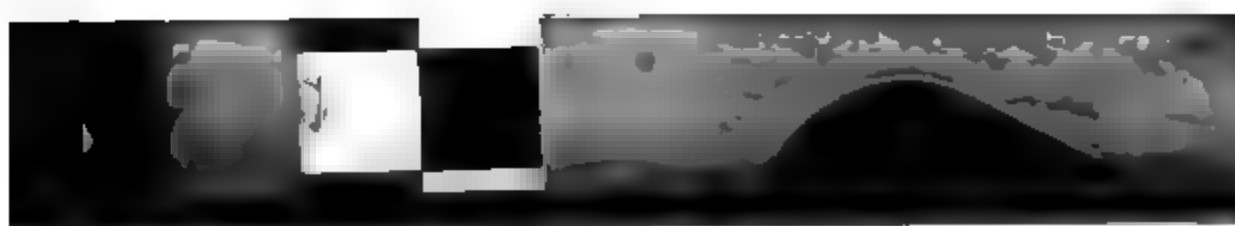
Mr. Fabian rose and his heavy eyes had brightened. "Neither of us will go alone, after this," he said.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A TIDAL WAVE

MR. FABIAN'S firm stand resulted in a dissolution of his partnership, and very soon he was able to repair with Edgar to the island.

The son had found the man-to-man relationship with his father a strangely sweet one; and by the time they reached the island — so deeply had his father's steadfastness and suffering worked upon Edgar, he had no other plan than that of rejuvenating the tired man's strained nerves. Therefore, when Mr. Fabian reached the heavenly calm of his hill cottage, he found his wife and daughter ready to accompany him on a cruise. Mrs. Fabian, lukewarm sailor though she was, was as fully prepared as Kathleen; and with scarcely any delay they all started out on the yacht. Mr. Fabian urged Phil to join the party, but he could not leave his work, and in any case would not add himself to a family party at this time. He and Violet stood on the shore and watched the white sails swell as they caught the wind.



### *A Tidal Wave*

Edgar had been so absorbed in his father and his plans that she had but a flying glimpse of him after his return from New York; but it flattered her to observe that he had left his mustache in the metropolis.

Philip's assiduous work during the summer resulted in finished pictures and numerous sketches, all of which he carried back in the autumn to the stable where Pat met him with effusion.

"Sure 't is a red Injun ye are!" he exclaimed at sight of his lodger's mahogany tints.

"Yes, and next summer, Pat, if I'm not a pauper, you're coming up there to get a red nose, too," responded Phil.

The first step toward independence had been made. He had finished the illustrations for Kathleen's fairy tales, and but a few days after his return, Mr. Tremaine came to the studio to welcome him and show him the first copy of the book; for it was October before Phil had consented to leave his enthralling Villa, being finally shooed out by Eliza who insisted that he either come over to them and live in a Christian house, or go back to his warm stable.

Phil was eager for news that Mr. Tremaine could give him.



### *The Inner Flame*

"Aunt Isabel has written me very little," he said. "I know they are settled in an apartment near the park, but how are they all, and how do they bear the change?"

"Wonderfully well," was the reply. "Mrs. Fabian is the one to feel the pinch, of course. Kathleen, not at all. She has too much resource within herself to be dependent, and then there are not a few people of influence who would find a Van Ruysler if she hid herself on the East Side."

It was true, Mrs. Fabian lived too much in reflected glory to suffer loneliness, and as the winter went on Kathleen drew her into artistic circles where Philip's interests lay, and gradually she gained much pride and satisfaction in the understanding of technical terms, and learned not to discuss pictures. She even occasionally felt some remorse in the remembrance of Mrs. Ballard and was conscious of a wish that she might have sympathized with her more.

The startling event in the family, however, was provided by Edgar. The great Mazzini was as good as his word, and Edgar Fabian started in at once, on his return to New York, as a teacher of the vocal art. Successful is too mild a word to be applied to the young tenor.



### *A Tidal Wave*

Mazzini procured him opportunities to sing in drawing-rooms where he had heretofore been the entertained. He sent pupils to him, and they advertised him *con amore*. Before the winter was over he became a fad. He drew a good salary in a fashionable church. Other musicians sneered at him as a *poseur*, and turned their lunch tables into knockers' clubs to ease their minds concerning the vagaries of this upstart.

Edgar, with his characteristic self-assurance gave full play to the moods of which he had spoken in the past to Violet. Perhaps he was not blind to the fact that it was good advertising, but in any case it was a temperamental fling which gave him the utmost satisfaction.

He had different sets of hangings made, divan covers, cushions, et cetera, easily removed and placed in a box couch, so that his pupils sometimes found a purple studio, sometimes a crimson, sometimes one in luminous gold. None knew beforehand in which mood the wonderful young *maestro* would be found; and they talked of him with bated breath.

His sister took the liberty, early in his career, of laughing at this ebullition of fancy, but she soon found that Edgar took himself seriously, and she repressed her smiles; for nothing suc-

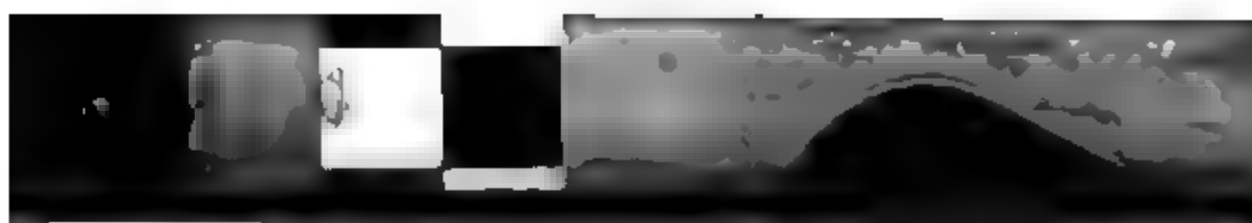
## *The Inner Flame*

ceeds like success; and Edgar Van Ruysler Fabian was an idol whom it was not her place to knock from his pedestal.

Violet Manning meanwhile was industriously proceeding with her own teaching. As some of it lay in fashionable schools, she heard echoes of Edgar's popularity, and she and her house-mates often attended the church where he sang. He came to their apartment occasionally and relaxed from the strain of living up to the ideal of his admirers whom he terrorized grandly at moments, after the most approved Mazzini methods.

Once he had the three bachelor maids at a chafing-dish supper at his studio. He was in a red mood that night, and the crimson hangings reminded Violet of the glowing heart which always lay on her dressing-table.

The function was an informal and jolly one. One of the men present was Edgar's accompanist, and he had played for Violet to dance. It was a triumphant occasion for the girl. She looked charming in a thin iridescent gown which changed with the blues and greens of the sea while she floated and pirouetted, as light and tireless as thistledown. Edgar's eyes were bright with pride in her and she was wildly



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applauded, sharing the honors of the evening with him.

Edgar sang the better for the inspiration of her, and when at her request he began, "O moon of my delight," she closed her eyes, shutting out the gay company and the diffused rosy light. Again she saw him stretched on the grass in the silvery radiance of a still, still night.

"I think Mr. Fabian is in love with Violet," said Regina afterward, privately, to Roxana.

"I think he is in love with himself," returned Roxana; "and I take off my hat to Violet, for I believe she knows it, too. I'm afraid if I were her age and he wanted me, I'd marry him even if I knew he'd beat me all the time he was n't singing."

Her housemates noticed that Violet never spoke of Edgar, and they drew their conclusions. She had a sketch of his head done by Phil in an idle moment, pinned up on her wall. That and the bonbon box were the only evidences of the acquaintance save those occasional calls with which Edgar favored the apartment. The fact that he came at all was important, for his engagements were legion.

Philip carried himself much as he had done the winter before. Through the Fabians and

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Mr. Tremaine he began to have invitations, but he declined them. Mr. Tremaine bought the painting of the wave which he had seen at the island, and one of his friends bought another of Phil's marines.

The artist kept on with his work in the life class at the Academy. Edgar sometimes tried to get him for a festivity at the studio, but, as he told his sister in disgust, one might as well try to get the Shah of Persia.

Every Sunday evening Phil spent at the Fabians' but never since he had returned to town had he made opportunity to resume a disturbing intimacy with Kathleen. Her book was having a fairly good sale, and the girl was at work upon another. Their lives lay apart mainly except on the Sunday evenings when Mr. Fabian, once again adjusted to his business life, claimed the guest far more than any of the others.

Edgar, finding that the propinquity of Phil and Violet during his absence in the summer had not produced any results, altered his expectations of trouble from that quarter. He made it a point to spend his Sunday evenings with the family, in order, as his mother said, to keep up the acquaintance; and on one of these



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evenings, toward spring, he brought Violet Manning to supper.

The busy young teacher's friendship with Kathleen had not progressed. The latter firmly believed that any romantic notions which such a girl might conceive for Edgar would bring her to grief in the end; and his present amazing popularity but augmented that conviction; so the girls had exchanged one call only during the season.

Violet responded to Mrs. Fabian's invitation for this Sunday and Edgar regarded her critically throughout the evening.

Never had he felt himself such authority on girls as now. They crowded his studio. Fashionable girls, wealthy girls, pretty girls, plain girls, clever ones, dull ones, aggressive, and shy girls; and he had frequently detected himself comparing the more interesting with Violet. Her spirit, her poise, her independence, her compact, graceful, healthy body, always stood the test.

As of old, to-night she seemed more interested in Phil than in himself. Her spontaneous joy over the news that during the past week he had sold a third picture, actually roused again Edgar's old train of thought. How did he know

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what had occurred during the summer, between the farmhouse and the Villa? Were these two only waiting, perhaps, until Phil began to find a sale for his pictures?

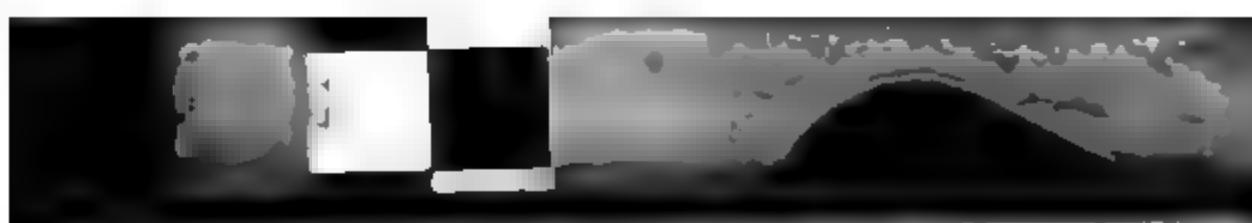
Poor little Violet was not intriguing. She found herself embarrassed in Edgar's family circle, and she was defending herself in the only way she knew. It seemed as if it must be legible on her face that she out-adored the adoration of all the singer's pupils; and it was a relief to her when she and the object were at last in a taxicab on the way home. The cover of the darkness, and the sober return to thoughts of to-morrow's duties, made her heave an inaudible sigh; but it is the unexpected that always happens.

Edgar's teeth were tightly closed and every street-lamp they passed showed him gazing at his companion.

"I wonder," he said at last, — "I wonder, Violet, why I've never been able to make you like me better. Other — other people like me."

"Probably that's the reason," returned the girl lightly. "Some one must help strike an average."

She did not say it easily; for she was obliged



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to swallow between sentences; but she said it pretty well, and applauded herself.

"You see I love you, Violet," he went on, as simply as the most non-temperamental swain could have spoken.

She shrank into her corner, and when he tried to take her hands she crossed them quickly on her breast.

"Which mood is this?" she asked, a tumultuous beating under the crossed hands.

"You don't believe me," said Edgar quietly. "It's true, Violet. I want you to marry me. You've made me believe once or twice — and yet the next moment I always feel your utter indifference. I'm afraid you're a flirt."

"I know you are!" responded the girl, her fingers whitening against her fluttering heart. "I'm afraid of you, Edgar."

Happiness leaped into his eyes and he gathered her hands into his in spite of her.

"Have you ever seen 'The Concert'?" she asked breathlessly.

"Oh, that's what you mean!" exclaimed Edgar triumphantly.

"You should n't marry," said Violet. "You are like a *matinée* idol. You will lose your capital when you marry, unless you are like that



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selfish man. I warn you, I am not like that wonderful wife. I could n't bear it."

"You've thought about it, then," said Edgar joyously.

"Yes, oh, yes," replied Violet, her defences down and tears welling through her half-closed lids. "I'm sure I should be miserable."

"Then you love me." Edgar drew her out of her corner into his arms. "Violet, I promise you—"

"Dear," she interrupted him, "I am just as much afraid of myself as of you. No convention would hold me. The minute I found you were not honest with me — that you concealed from me — I should go. You would look about, and I should n't be there."

Edgar held her close in ecstatic possession.

"And that's why I'll be honest with you, Violet. I swear it. If we're both honest, what can —"

The taxi-cab driver threw open the door.

Once again the daisy-snow drifted over the hills on Brewster's Island; and Eliza sat in the doorway of the Villa Chantecler watching Phil adjust his possessions.

"When are the Fabians coming?" she asked.



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"Next week."

"Are you and Miss Kathleen goin' to do another book this year?"

"I hope so. She's going to let me see her story when she comes. She has written her first novel."

Eliza's eyes studied him sharply during a silence.

"Is she engaged yet?" she asked.

"Not that I know of."

"I thought you two were pretty thick one time there last summer."

"It's not for the likes o' me to be thick with the likes o' her," replied Phil, busy setting up an easel.

"I'd like to know why not," retorted Eliza, who had read between the lines of Phil's letters during the winter; and illustrated her imaginings with looks and actions remembered from the season before. "Think of the pictures you've sold this winter. Look how quick you've begun your success. Has Kathleen many beaux?"

"She has worshippers," returned Phil, with a slight smile; "and several of them come much nearer to her than I can."

"You can if you want to," said Eliza bluntly; "you're a great fool if you don't."

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Philip turned and looked at the speaker in surprise. Her words were so exactly opposite to the training he gave himself night and morning.

"'T ain't as if her father was so rich any more. Nobody could say you was after money, and," Eliza's voice lost its hardness, "your — your Aunt Mary left me her ring you remember."

Phil smiled at her openly now, then he went on with his work.

"You're a loyal soul, Eliza, and you always yearn to give me everything I want; but Miss Fabian will be married long before I'm able to ask any woman to trust herself to me."

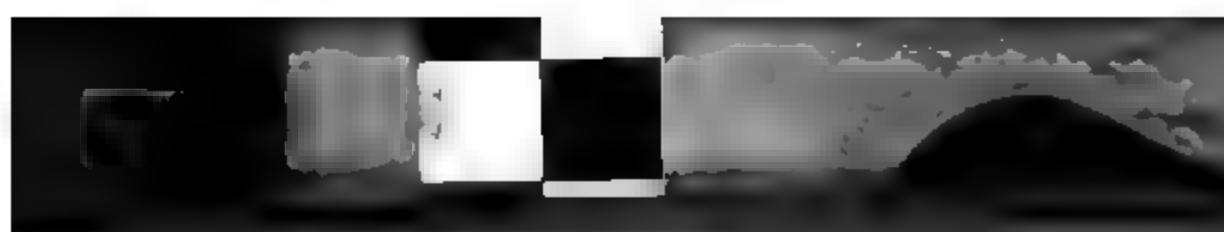
Eliza gave him a fierce nod and drew down the corners of her mouth.

"*I — don't — believe it!*" she said, so significantly that Phil flushed and looked at her again.

"*I've* got eyes if you have n't," she added; and with this Parthian shot she rose and went back to the house.

Philip went on with his work, but the flush stayed, and there was a line between his shining eyes.

At this juncture Pat came up from the wharf



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with a heavy package. The family had returned to the house in Gramercy Park, and he and Phil had vacated the stable this spring.

"Sure the Queen o' Sheby hersilf stepped off the boat," he announced as he came into the Villa.

"My Aunt come!" exclaimed Phil, turning around quickly. "I wonder what changed their plan. Was she alone?"

"She was not, thin," declared the Irishman proudly. "D'ye think the Princess did n't come straight up and hold out her pretty hand with a smile swate enough to beckon the bees? 'How d'ye do, Pat,' says she. 'T is fine ye're to be here this summer,' says she. 'We shall call upon you for a lot o' help,' she says."

Philip stood still in indecision. No, he would n't hurry over. They knew he was not expecting the arrival; and he fell to business again.

The Irishman looked about him, on pictures and sketches.

"Sure 't is a power o' work ye've done, me bye," he said. "I feel I shud have on a bathin' suit to look at 'em."

Eliza from her window saw Captain James drive up to the boulder cottage and saw the ladies dismount, and with them the maid of

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all work with whom they intended this year to live the simple life. Pat would be a valuable auxiliary.

It was evening before Phil went across the field to call. A brilliant planet showed a pale wake of light across the water, forerunner of the moon which was soon to rise.

"So serene, so soft, is she," thought Phil, in whose head Eliza's words still rang, "and so remote," he added. "So she shines on me, and on all, alike. Eliza has n't seen the others, so she thinks me selected"; and he pressed down the stopper which a long time ago he fitted to repress disturbing emotions; for in the last hours they had effervesced threateningly around its rough edges.

Mrs. Fabian received him effusively and Kathleen with the calm directness to which he had adjusted himself.

"Your portrait comes off this summer, Aunt Isabel," he said.

"I can't afford it, my dear," she answered.

Phil shook his head. "If I painted a portrait of every Fabian on earth, would it pay my debt to you?" he asked. "And anyway I have the finest collection of Sidneys in the country; but there is n't a portrait among them."



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"Do yourself sometime, Phil, will you?" suggested Kathleen.

"Yes, and you," he replied. "I want to do a picture of you on my terrace. Pat and I have brought up the bay to-day; and I want to begin it immediately."

"I know," laughed Kathleen. "You want to do both mother and me before our complexions desert us."

"I'll take you alternate days if you'll let me. I'd like you to-morrow, for my background is just as I want it." He turned to Mrs. Fabian. "Will you lend me your daughter to-morrow? I have the finest of Irish terriers for a watchdog, you know."

Mrs. Fabian shrugged her shoulders. "I certainly shan't waste my time chaperoning you two cousins at this late day," she answered.

On the afternoon following Eliza met Kathleen coming across the field. She looked at her in surprise, for instead of khaki the girl was wearing a filmy white gown whose length was lifted from the clover and buttercups, and carried over her arm.

Eliza looked admiringly at the lithe figure, and the deep eyes that beamed kindly upon her.

"No wonder you are startled, Eliza; I am

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going to sit for my portrait," she said, clasping Miss Brewster's hard hand.

"You look as if you was ready for your wedding," returned Eliza.

"I should like it to be here if I ever have one," said Kathleen; and Eliza watched the rose-color spread from the girl's cheek to her brow, while the young eyes kept their steady, kind regard; then she inquired of Eliza as to the winter.

"I do believe she kind o' likes me for his sake," thought Eliza, standing still to look after the slender, graceful figure when Kathleen moved on amid the daisies and clover.

"She's a flower herself. That's what she is, and Mr. Philip did n't go as red as a beet for nothin' when I spoke yesterday. He thinks she's above him. There ain't anybody above him!"

Whatever was the errand that had brought Eliza into the field this afternoon she abandoned it, and turned slowly back toward the farmhouse, glancing often at the Villa through whose door the slender white figure had disappeared.

"I wish there was somethin' I could do to help 'em," she thought. "That pretty critter can't do a thing against Mr. Philip's determination if he's set out. I know *him*."



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"Why was Kathleen so exquisite?" asked Mrs. Wright as Eliza came in.

"Settin' for her portrait," answered Eliza absently. "Said she was too dressed up to come and see you, but would come to-morrow."

"She was a picture already, coming bare-headed through that flowery field," said Mrs. Wright.

Eliza did not respond. She disappeared into her own room and closed the door. Then she unlocked her trunk and took from its depths a package which she untied, disclosing a fine camel's-hair shawl. She unfolded it with loving fingers, and regarded it. "A good enough weddin' present even for her," she muttered.

Then she reached into another corner and took out a tin box which she unlocked and drew forth a tiny velvet case, rubbed and worn. When she opened this, tears rushed to her eyes and she lifted it to her lips. "Nothin' could make you so happy, my dear one," she murmured brokenly. "Nothin'! Nothin'!"

Half an hour later Eliza entered the Villa. Pat was doing some scraping of palette knives in the kitchen. She looked timidly out on the terrace. A lovely living picture met her eyes.



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Kathleen was sitting on the white railing, her filmy gown falling in folds at her feet. Behind her rose the bay-crowned pillar casting shadows on the red-glints of her hair.

"Mr. Philip, please excuse me," said Eliza humbly; "but could you spare Pat to go on an errand for us?"

"Yes, yes," replied Phil absently, working at a white heat.

Eliza withdrew with quiet celerity. The errand she required was to be performed at a distance, and she was so nervous while she gave Pat directions that he grinned at her.

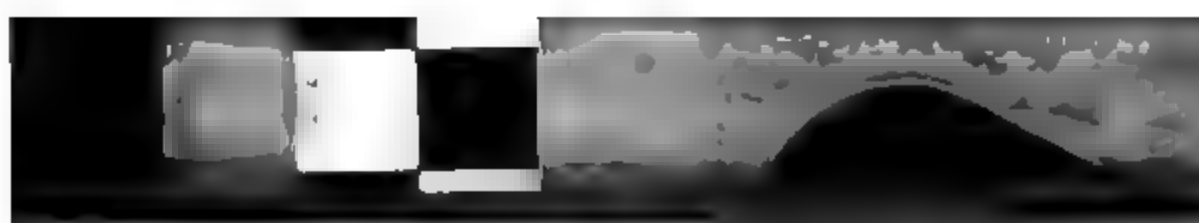
"Ye're thinkin' about *thim*!" he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the terrace.

Eliza's eyes widened. "Why in the world should I think about them?" she asked, all the time tolling Pat away toward the farmhouse.

"I cud look at 'em from now till Christmas sittin' there," he responded. "I don't blame ye."

"I have n't asked you about the turtle doves," said Phil, sketching in Kathleen's hands.

"They believe themselves the happiest people



### *A Tidal Wave*

in the world, and perhaps they are. Violet has really convinced me that she is the right girl for Edgar. A meek one would have little chance."

"They're coming up here, I suppose."

"Oh, yes. Edgar can't get his vacation from the church quite yet, and she'll not come till he can."

"Of course not," replied Phil simply. "How can one voluntarily live without the other a day after the great discovery is made?"

Kathleen made no answer to this. The lump that rose in her throat was rebellious; and the artist, looking up suddenly, met fire in the depths of her dark eyes. The lids dropped. His hand grew suddenly unsteady.

"Tell me when you're tired, Kathleen," he said. "We have the summer." He smiled as he spoke; but it was a rigid sort of smile.

The field sown thickly with the late wild-flowers of the island, and stretching to a sparkling sea, the rustling orchard leaves, and the crown of bay behind the queenly young head, the soft white figure with the loosely dropped hands! It was no time or place for Kathleen to look at him like that.

"I'm tired now, I believe," she said, quietly. "Will it be enough for to-day?"

## *The Inner Flame*

"At least until you're rested. Come in and let me show you a sketch I did yesterday."

She rose and lifted her white shoulders with a movement of weariness, then they moved inside the room.

A vase of daisies stood on the table. "I believe," said Phil, "I should have asked you to wear daisies in your hair."

They were standing by the table and he took three of the long stems and breaking them to convenient length made a movement toward her head. Then he shrank. "Put them in, will you?" he asked.

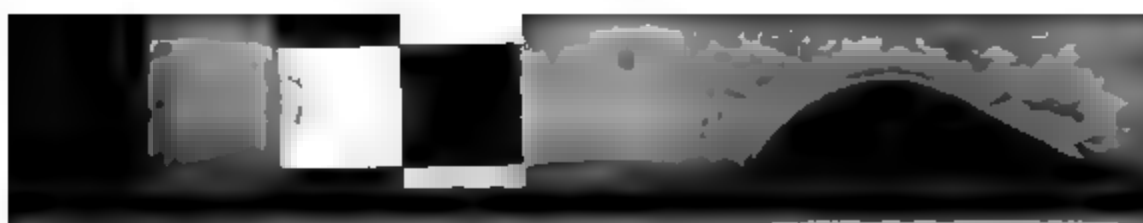
The least smile touched her lips, and her hands hung down.

"You know best what you want," she replied and inclined her regal head toward him.

The golden radiance streamed through the small-paned windows and reddened her hair.

Phil's fingers trembled as they tucked the flower stems under the soft folds. He dropped his eyes from the lustrous tints, and they caught a sudden elusive spark of violet, then green that shone on the table. He looked closer, and pointed.

"Did you leave your ring there?" he asked.



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Kathleen looked. A diamond ring was shining beneath the tall candlestick.

She shook her daisy-crowned head.

"It's not mine," she said, wondering. "I never saw it."

"Nor I." Phil's breath came faster. "This is an enchanted place, Kathleen. The very spirit of the sea must have pitied me in my struggle and brought this ring." The ring! He looked at it, dazed for another moment, then like a flash he remembered Eliza's interruption, and his illumined eyes met Kathleen's, grave and wondering.

"I adore you, my darling. I give up the fight." He kept his eyes on hers as he picked up the quaint little jewel and pressed it to his lips.

Kathleen smiled at him, then her eyes veiled and dropped.

He lifted her hand and slowly put the ring on her finger; for the inner sanctuary of her heart had flown open, and he had seen within.

Quickly he clasped her close in his arms. She clung to him, and the golden radiance enveloped them.

THE END

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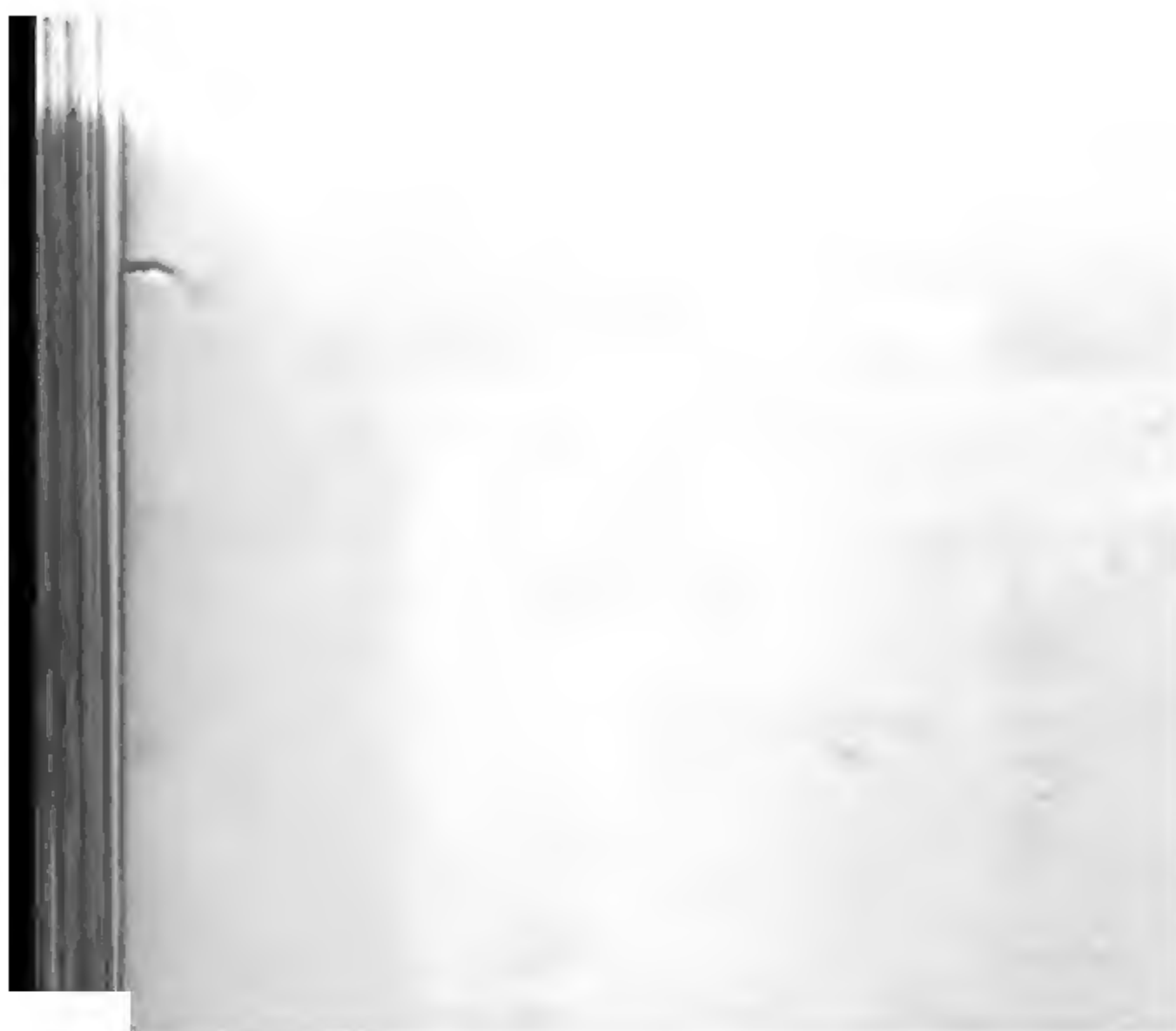
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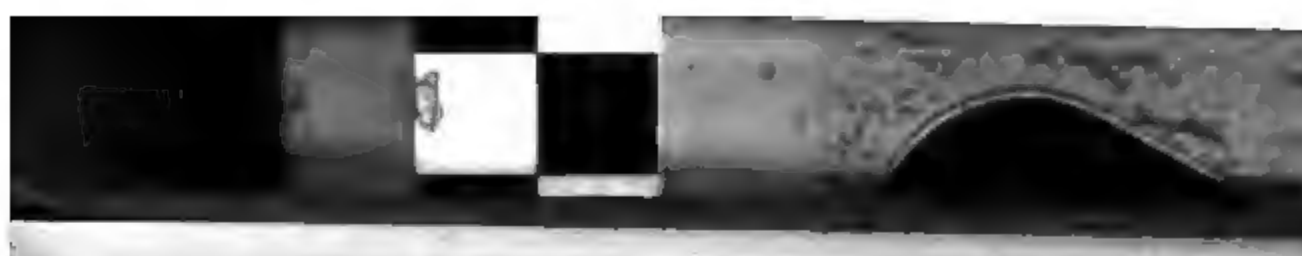


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